



Palacký University
Olomouc

With (an) eye to Czech article use in Dutch

**Patterns of interlanguage production of articles
by adult Czech learners in FL Dutch**

PhD thesis

General Linguistics and Theory of Communication

Mgr. Markéta Kluková

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Wilken Engelbrecht

External consultant: Prof. dr. Folkert Kuiken

I declare that this dissertation is the result of my individual and independent research. All of the sources consulted have been properly cited. This thesis is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at any other university. I also declare that this thesis does meet the regulatory length including footnotes, but excluding the bibliography and appendices.

Olomouc, 23 December 2021

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„*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*“

Ludwig Wittgenstein¹

Introduction

Research shows that article use causes persistent error variability at all levels of mastering a language in the second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) acquisition (Wethlij 1999; Cornips & Hulk 2008; Trenkić 2009). This phenomenon is observed even more strongly among learners with a mother tongue (L1) without articles (Ionin et al. 2004; Trenkić 2007; Pimingsdorfer 2010).

This study was motivated by personal experience of the author with article acquisition as being a learner of FL Dutch and teacher of FL Dutch. Articles are elementary building blocks of the Dutch language. The use of articles plays an important role in the field of morphosyntax, semantics and pragmatics since the category of articles is used to mark the identifiability of referents in noun phrases (NPs). Articles belong under functional words that form “*the glue of a sentence*” (Gass & Selinker 2009: 166). That means that we use functional words in Dutch in order to refer and to make the utterance coherent. Furthermore, articles in Dutch carry additional grammatical information about gender, number and, in some archaic forms, also case.

Nevertheless, experience shows that adult language learners have difficulties reaching the level of a native speaker in this grammatical category. Due to the morphosyntactic importance of articles and a high frequency of this grammatical category in Dutch, incorrect use of articles might represent unbeatable limits to the language of a Czech FL learner.

In order to be able to understand such limits, this research aims to explore how adult speakers of Czech use Dutch articles, and what they know about how to use Dutch articles. Which patterns do occur in the article production of Czech learners of FL Dutch? What might be the reason for the observed article production errors?

The major aims of this research are thus:

- to explore the existing body of literature on the question of article use (in Dutch) and FL learning of this grammatical phenomenon;
- to examine the article production of Czech learners of FL Dutch;
- to determine patterns of article production errors by Czech FL learners of Dutch.

¹ Wittgenstein (2001: 68).

The dissertation is organised as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the field of L2 and FL acquisition research and provides an overview of relevant research into L2 and FL. Furthermore, we take a closer look at the research of article acquisition. In order to clearly understand what the category of articles may express from the semantic and pragmatic point of view, the category of (in)definiteness is described in Chapter 2. For the purpose of examining the article production of Czech adults learning FL Dutch, the marking of definiteness by the article use in Dutch and comparable language tools in Czech needed to be researched. Therefore, article use in Dutch and language features related to definiteness in Czech are presented in this chapter as well. Thereafter, a hypothesis based on the theoretical basis is formulated in Chapter 3.

In the empirical part of this research, the hypothesis is examined by carrying out a free text writing test, a translation test and a forced-choice elicitation test. Chapter 4 is devoted to presenting the methodology and defining the scope of this study. Chapter 5 presents the results of the empirical part of this research, which are analysed and compared with each other. The results and findings are summarised and the hypothesis is evaluated in Chapter 6. Furthermore, possible implications of the findings of this study for teaching of articles, limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are described in this chapter. Finally, final conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7.

1 Theoretical background

In order to be able to achieve the above-described research aims, it is necessary to define the basic terminology used in this study. The terms *first language* or *mother tongue* (L1) are used when referring to a language that is learnt as the very first language in childhood. Further, a distinction is made between second and foreign language acquisition. The term *second language* (L2) usually refers to a language that plays an institutional and social role in the community (Ellis 2009: 6). For example, Dutch as a second language is learnt in the Netherlands. In contrast, the term *foreign language* (FL) refers to a language that is learnt in settings where the language plays no major social role in the community, is not used as a daily communication tool and is primarily learnt only in the classroom (Ibid.). An example of foreign language acquisition is Dutch learnt at the university in the Czech Republic or Poland. The extent to which the sociolinguistic conditions of acquisition determine learning processes and outcome are yet to be explored by language acquisition research.

In research into L2 and FL acquisition, the universal term *second language acquisition* (SLA) is often used. Ellis (2009: 6-7) explains that the second language (L2) is often used in general terms when referring to any other language that is learnt after the first language (L1) has been acquired, not taking into account the language learning area and the particular order in which the language is learnt. However, considering the fact that this study examines the Dutch article use by adult Czech learners in the Czech Republic, we consider Dutch as a foreign language in this study. In the Czech Republic, children typically learn at least two foreign languages at the elementary school level. Therefore, we want to emphasize that Dutch is not the second, the third or even the fourth language learnt by the examined group. Besides that, an important factor is also the fact that it primarily concerns *instructed language acquisition*. This type of acquisition means that the learners receive (explicit) instructions, while *naturalistic language acquisition* takes place incidentally without any organized language teaching (Ellis 2009: 6).

1.1 Research into L2/FL acquisition

The research into L2/FL acquisition attracts a lot of attention of applied linguists. In this field, a number of central topics has been defined: role of (exposure to) language input, cognitive processes and variable outcomes of language acquisition, influence of the mother tongue on the new language structures to be learnt and limits on the effects of the learner's

production (VanPatten & Williams 2006: 9-11). This chapter provides an overview of studies forming a relevant theoretical basis for this research focusing on the influence of the mother tongue, various intra- and interlingual processes and variable outcomes of language acquisition.

1.1.1 Behaviouristic theories

Behaviourism is one of the earliest theories of language acquisition of both L1 and L2 that became widespread in the 1960s. Following the behaviouristic view of learning presented by Skinner (1957), language acquisition became seen as a general learning process of responding to external *stimuli*. The final *habit* is formed as a certain *response* that regularly occurs to a certain stimulus. A correct response to a stimulus is taught by rewarding a good reaction (*reinforcement*) and correcting a wrong response (*punishment*). Grounded in behaviourism, language is acquired by imitation of sounds and structures that the learners have heard. Mental processes, such as deduction and induction based on the language input, were left out of consideration.

According to behaviourist linguists, old language habits inhibit the learning of new habits. Lado's (1957) *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* was based on comparing similarities and differences between L1 and L2. Objectives of such a comparison should have predicted the language acquisition by L2 learners. Benson (2002: 68) pointed out that "[t]his belief was rooted in a behaviourist theory of language learning whereby learning was equated with 'habit forming': the habits of the L1 were believed to be 'transferred', and regarded as 'interfering with' the newly-acquired habits of the L2." It was thus presumed that all errors made in the L2 language production were caused by *negative transfer (interference)* in case L1 consists of different patterns than required in L2. Moreover, behaviourists assumed that all errors could be predicted based on such differences identified by means of contrastive analysis of L1 and L2. On the other hand, *positive transfer (facilitation)* could facilitate a successful L2 acquisition of similar patterns.

Since not all errors and deviations from L2/FL can be explained and predicted by a contrastive analysis, this approach was criticized and receded into the background in the 1970s (see also Chapter 1.1.2). However, in the late 1980s, the role of transfer is acknowledged again and today there is hardly any doubt that L1 plays a significant role in the L2/FL acquisition (cf. Selinker 1992; Ellis 2009; Van de Craats 2000; Kuiken 2016), especially by adult learners (Jansen & Lalleman 1980; Hiligsmann et al. 2008; Ziemann et al. 2011; Schepens 2015). Adult learners are expected to be more fixed to the L1 language structures as mentioned by Appel &

Kuiken (2006: 3) when commenting the research into L1 transfer by Jansen & Lalleman (1980):

*“For example, the Turkish informants appeared to place the verb at the end of the sentence much more often, in accordance with the dominant structure in their mother tongue. Remember that these were adult L2 acquirers, and if one thing had become clear, it was the following: transfer is much more common in the language use of older L2 acquirers than of younger L2 acquirers.”*²

In the course of time, the definition of language transfer has also become wider and currently refers to “any instance of learner data where a statistically significant correlation (or probability-based relation) is shown to exist between some feature of the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired” (Ellis 2009: 351).

1.1.2 Nativist theories

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, universal linguistic principles began to play an important role in the L2/FL acquisition research. In reaction to the simplistic prediction of behaviourism, Chomsky (1959: 39-48) criticized the belief that the complex language system could be acquired by pure imitation and analogy. In contrast to that, he claimed that the child’s knowledge of its mother tongue comes largely from *Universal Grammar* (UG) defined as a highly constrained structure consisting of linguistic principles (Chomsky 1986: 146-148). This nativist view of language acquisition describes an innate ability to learn a language, the so-called *Acquisition Device*, that is inherent to the principles of UG and activated once exposed to a language input. Based on that, the nativist approach provides an explanation for the logical problem formulated as *poverty of stimulus*. The lack of stimulus refers to the observation that children produce utterances, which could not have been heard and thus imitated.

A child builds its L1 knowledge while testing hypotheses made based on the innate system of universal *principles* common to all languages. According to the language input, the child adjusts its hypotheses, acquires the L1 *parameters* and builds its *linguistic competence*. Chomsky (2006: 102) describes linguistic competence as an internalized system of rules that determine both the phonetic and semantic properties of an utterance while *performance* is the actual observed use of the language by a speaker.

Lenneberg (1967) popularized the *Critical Period Hypothesis* claiming that there is an

² The original text is in Dutch: “Zo bleken de Turkse informanten veel vaker het werkwoord aan het eind van de zin te plaatsen, overeenkomstig de dominante structuur in hun moedertaal. Bedenk wel dat het hier ging om volwassen T2-verwervers, en als één ding duidelijk was geworden, dan was het wel het volgende: transfer komt veel meer voor in het taalgebruik van oudere dan van jongere T2-verwervers” (Appel & Kuiken 2006: 3).

optimal biological period for language acquisition ending at puberty. The younger the learner is, the quicker and the better the learning process outcomes become. After the critical period, human capacity for learning languages declines and native-like linguistic competence can no longer be achieved. This theory was primarily based on L1 acquisition, but has often been extended also to (a specific area of) L2/FL acquisition, for example phonology. Later on, the Critical Period Hypothesis was criticized and has acquired many different variations (Krashen 1975; Long 1990; Birdsong 1992). In general, it is assumed that there is a negative correlation between age of acquisition and native-like attainment of L2/FL (White & Genesee 1996: 234), but the precise age of the critical period (sometime between age 5 and puberty) and also other influential factors such as personal motivation, input and output skills, language learning aptitude, and the learning environment are still subject of discussion (Birdsong 1999; Robertson 2002).

The nativist UG theory is very influential in the L1 acquisition research and also has its place in the L2/FL acquisition research (see Chapter 1.2.1). However, the theory has lost momentum in recent L2/FL acquisition research since new approaches have been evolved (see Chapter 1.1.3).

1.1.3 Further research into L2/FL acquisition

Both the behaviourist and nativist approach significantly influenced the L2/FL acquisition research. Many applied linguists analysed and further developed the above-described theories or came up with a whole new approach that might be widely accepted in this field. Among the recent and influential approaches, the cognitive theory of *Connectionism* (Ellis 1998), the pragmatic *Usage-Based Theory*³ (Tomasello 2000, 2003) and the *Dynamic Systems Theory* approaches (Bot et al. 2007) can be mentioned.

In this chapter, theories and hypotheses are further discussed that are considered relevant for the studied topic.

1.1.3.1 Interlanguage

Selinker (1972, 1992) sees the learner's language system no longer as a collection of errors

³ The Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition as introduced by Tomasello (2003) emphasizes the primary role of pragmatics in human communication. According to this theory, language structures emerge based on language use. Such an approach might be pertinent for this research, but it is important to point out that this theory addresses L1 acquisition of children. Above that, there are some common objections to this theory, namely the lack of explanation for dealing with syntactically complex constructions, generalisation/abstraction process and the poverty of stimulus (Ghalebi & Sadighi 2015: 193-194).

or deviations from the target language system, but rather as a separate language system called *interlanguage*:

“An ‘interlanguage’ may be linguistically described using as data the observable output resulting from a speaker’s attempt to produce a foreign norm, i.e., both his errors and non-errors. It is assumed that such behaviour is highly structured” (Selinker 1992: 231).

Interlanguage is systematic and rule-based, but it is also characterised by variability in the learner’s production. Ellis (2009: 117) reflects on the variability as follows: “Within a single stage of acquisition, learners do not consistently make use of a single form or pattern, but rather show a preference for the use of one form among others that they use during the same period”. Such inconsistencies might occur arbitrarily or systematically based on sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors.

Nowadays, the term interlanguage is widely used when referring to a mental continuum of language systems that are being constructed and reconstructed by the L2/FL learners in order to achieve the target language level (cf. Corder 1992; Hiligsmann 1997; Ellis 2009). This interpretation is also accepted in this study since the interlanguage of adult Czech learners of Dutch with a focus on article use is the researched topic.

Most L2/FL learners strive for a native-like competence, but the performance of the majority of them never reaches a native-like proficiency in L2/FL (Selinker 1972, 1992; White & Genesee 1996; Han 2004;). Nonetheless, one might be wondering what the native proficiency level exactly refers to considering the wide spectrum of native speakers’ competence. A number of studies examined the linguistic competence of adult learners who appeared to have achieved near-native competence in their L2/FL and argued that some of their subjects performed like native speakers (Birdsong 1992; White & Genesee 1996).

Selinker (1972: 215) argues that *fossilisation* might cause a discrepancy between L1 and L2/FL. Learners might tend to keep particular linguistic rules and subsystems in their interlanguage, not being influenced by the age and/or amount of exposure to and instruction in L2/FL. He argues that fossilization causes the phenomenon of *backsliding*, which refers to a persistent reappearance of linguistic structures in the interlanguage after they were thought to have been no longer used.

Long (2005: 372) presents another term for this interlanguage process, namely *stabilisation* of a structure or rule in the interlanguage. He sees stabilisation as the precursor to permanent fossilization and claims that we are not able to test whether the observed attributes of interlanguage are finally fossilized. Todeva (1992) suggested three language elements and

structures that might tend to be stabilized or fossilized in the interlanguage: first, categories lacking a transparent form-function relation, such as articles; second, semi-productive rules with unsystematic exceptions, such as negative prefixation in English and finally, elements of a highly arbitrary nature, such as prepositions, collocations or grammatical gender in Dutch. Therefore, frequency, regularity, perceptual saliency, typological markedness and semantic transparency of a grammatical category play an important role in the L2/FL language acquisition (cf. Long 2005).

Furthermore, Selinker (1972) distinguishes five fundamental processes within the L2/FL acquisition: namely language transfer, transfer of training, learning strategies, communication strategies and *overgeneralisation* of L2/FL rules. In Chapter 1.1.2, we have already taken a closer look at the language transfer. At this stage, overgeneralisation will be discussed.

Overgeneralisation is the process of extending the application of a rule or a form of L2/FL to domains where the learner expects them to be correct while the L2/FL grammar does not allow it. It occurs when a learner uses the regular past tense verb ending *-de/te* to produce excluded forms as demonstrated in (1). The same might be applied in the article use in Dutch by overgeneralising the Dutch definite article *de* where *het* is required (2) (see Chapter 2.2).

(1) ik kookte *ik gate [ging]⁴

I cooked *I goed [went]

(2) *De huis is groot.

The house is big.

Besides overgeneralisation, *simplification* and *imitation* belong to intralingual processes that are based on the knowledge of L2/FL. Especially in the early stages of language acquisition, the learner might omit language elements or structures that are redundant to convey essential meanings (3). Such simplified utterances enable the learner to communicate with a minimum of linguistic competence. It is debatable whether these can be seen as a product of the learner's developing linguistic system, which could be compared to L1 development, or simply as an unsystematic one-off communication strategy designed to promptly interact in L2/FL.

⁴ Generally, also the ending of past participle forms is often overgeneralized. Learners tend to use regular *-d/t* instead of irregular *-en* and vice versa. Therefore, forms like **hij heeft geslaapt* (he has slept) or **hij heeft geleven* (he has lived) might occur instead of *hij heeft geslapen* and *hij heeft geleefd*. Interestingly, more advanced Czech learners seem to be more likely to overgeneralise the irregular *-en*. This might be caused due to the higher attention to this phenomenon during their language acquisition and a high frequency of irregular verbs in the language use.

Nevertheless, they help the learner to communicate in L2/FL and thus be exposed to a wider range of language input (Littlewood 2006: 508).

(3) *Hij heeft [een] nieuw boek gekocht.

*He has bought [a] new book.

Although the process of imitation based on behaviourism was widely rejected in the 1970s as discussed earlier (see Chapter 1.1.2), it is now again recognized as a generally important process in the language acquisition (Littlewood 2006: 509). The learner might use set phrases while coping with common situations in their environment including grammar constructions the learner has not mastered yet. Imitation occurs for example when the learner uses a construction of a subordinate clause in a commonly used phrase, although he/she has never learnt this construction (4). The so-called *formulaic speech* is an important feature of developing the learner's interlanguage (Ibid.).

(4) Weet jij hoe laat het is?

Do you know what time it is?

The above-described interlingual processes might have effect on the acquisition and production of the article use in Dutch by Czech learners, especially with regard to omitting articles when considered redundant and overgeneralising the articles (see Chapter 3).

1.1.3.2 Full Transfer Full Access

Schwartz & Sprouse (1994, 1996) combine the approach based on language transfer and UG by proposing the *Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis (FTFA)*. They claim that L1 constitutes the initial state of L2/FL acquisition, hence, a *full transfer* occurs. When the L1 grammar is unable to cover new L2/FL properties, the new parameter settings are found in UG. During the L2/FL acquisition, the interlanguage is subsequently restructured and the resulting interlanguage grammars are UG-constrained since the learner has got *full access* to UG. They claim that L1 properties are fully transferred in the initial state and the interlanguage grammar is restructuring during the course of development in response to properties of the L2/FL input interacting with UG.

Although this theory combines the L1 basis with a UG-constrained L2/FL development, it

is not guaranteed that the final outcome will be native-like. Properties of the L1 grammar or subsequent interlanguage grammars might lead to misanalyses of the L2/FL input (White 2003a: 68). On the other hand, White et al. (2004) argue that the properties of UG remain available to L2/FL learners regardless of age of acquisition. Based on that, they claim that “native-like mental representations are in principle acquirable” (White et al. 2004: 106). According to this theory, adult learners might be able to acquire article use at a native-like level. This assumption is further developed in the research into article acquisition (see Chapter 1.2.1).

1.1.3.3 Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis

Another theory based on UG access is the *Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis* (Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b). It is suggested that the L2/FL learners have unconscious knowledge of functional projections and features. However, they may experience difficulties in mapping fully specified abstract syntax to create correct morphological forms (Haznedar & Schwartz 1997; Prévost & White 2000). This hypothesis captures well the observation that while morphological production in the L2 interlanguage is variable, it is not completely random, but rather principled. For example, while the definite article *the* might not be reliably used to correctly mark definiteness of NPs, it is much less likely to be used in front of verbs. Nevertheless, this approach does not predict any surface inflections; it only describes omissions, once found in the production (cf. Trenkić 2007).⁵

This theory has been widely discussed in the research into article use acquisition due to the morphosyntactic function of this category (see Chapter 1.2).

1.1.3.4 Declarative/Procedural model

In the linguistic theory regarding the adult acquisition, age of exposure and failing to learn formal features are often discussed. Ullman (2001, 2004) proposed a model known as the *Declarative/Procedural model*. This model argues to neurobiologically explain the observation that the grammar acquisition in particular is affected by age of exposure. Two different memories are distinguished which are used for different types of (linguistic) knowledge. *Declarative memory* is claimed to be involved in the conscious and explicit learning and use of

⁵ To address this weakness, the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis has been modified with regard to the phonological level. Therefore, the *Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis* was proposed assuming that a transfer of L1 phonological representations might negatively affect the phonological production in L2 (Goad et al. 2003; Goad & White 2004).

facts and event knowledge, whereas *procedural memory* is argued to be implicated in the unconscious and implicit learning and processing of motor and cognitive skills and habits. According to the Declarative/Procedural model, the linguistic knowledge of lexicon, memorisation and use of word-specific information are acquired depending upon declarative memory, whereas the knowledge of grammar depends upon procedural memory. However, the use of the two types of memories is affected by age:

“It is proposed that, because grammatical computations relying on procedural memory become relatively difficult to learn, whereas the learning ability of declarative memory function remains relatively strong, late learners of language, particularly those exposed after late childhood or puberty, may differ in crucial ways from earlier learners [...] later learners tend to shift to declarative memory for the same ‘grammatical’ functions, which are moreover learned and processed differently than in the earlier learners” (Ullman 2001: 109).

Therefore, Ullman (2001) claims that the acquisition of grammatical linguistic forms depends upon procedural memory in the L1 acquisition, but is largely dependent upon declarative memory in the L2 acquisition.

1.2 Research into article use acquisition

Article use acquisition, primarily in English learnt as L1 or L2, attracts a lot of attention from applied linguists. It concerns a complex grammatical phenomenon that forms the basis of the sentence and yet learners often struggle to acquire it. Accurate article use has consistently been a difficult task for many language learners (Hawkins & Chan 1997; Wethlij 1999; Franceschina 2001; Hawkins 2001; Rozendaal & Baker 2006, 2008; Cornips & Hulk 2008; Trenkić 2008). These difficulties apply not only to L2/FL learners, but also to native speakers (Rozendaal & Baker 2006, 2008). Compared to other language structures, article acquisition by L1 learners takes longer. Rozendaal & Baker (2006, 2008) have shown that children completely omit articles in the initial phase of L1 acquisition whereby the degree and the period in which this occurs differ. The article acquisition process already starts around the age of two years, but it can take up to the age of eight years before the form and function of this grammatical category are fully acquired (Rozendaal & Baker 2008).

For L2/FL learners, article acquisition can be even more problematic, since articles are in most cases accent-less and therefore difficult to recognise (Wethlij 1999). Besides that, it might be even more challenging for learners with a L1 without articles (White 2003b; Ionin et al. 2004; Trenkić 2007, 2008). There has been relatively little L3 and/or FL research into article use. An important contribution was made by Leung (2005) who examined article use by

Cantonese learners with L2 English in L3 French and by Vietnamese learners in L2 French. Leung supported the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996) by denigrating the role of L1 in the initial state of L3 acquisition. Furthermore, Jaensch (2009) carried out a study into article use in L3 German by Japanese learners with L2 English. The results of this study showed a persistent omission of German articles in oral utterances and little evidence for the fluctuation between definiteness and specificity (cf. Ionin et al. 2004).

The earlier described basic dichotomy of behaviourist and nativist research into L2/FL acquisition is reflected also in the studies of article acquisition since two issues have been extensively debated in the research, namely L1 transfer and UG access. Some research proposals argue that there is only partial UG access through L1 during the L2/FL acquisition meaning that only features present in L1 are available to the L2/FL learners. Therefore, syntactic representations, which are absent in L1, might not be acquirable and must remain non-native-like (Franceschina 2001; Hawkins 2001). This assumption is known as the *Representational Deficit Hypothesis* or as the *Failed Functional Features Hypothesis* (Hawkins & Chan 1997). The argument in favour of these hypotheses is the observation that learners with different L1s often show a different level of mastering the grammatical category of articles in L2 and make different errors in their interlanguage (cf. Sabourin et al. 2006; Trenkić 2007).

In contrast, the earlier discussed Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (and Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis) can be mentioned (see Chapter 1.1.3.3) which assumes full UG access in the L2/FL acquisition, not restricted by L1 (Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b). While these hypotheses predict the category of articles to be available through the UG access to L2/FL learners, the Representational Deficit Hypothesis, on the other hand, predicts that this category would not be fully acquirable.

In the following paragraphs, two influential theories proposed specifically for article acquisition will be discussed.

1.2.1 Fluctuation Hypothesis

Among the nativist theories, Ionin's *Fluctuation Hypothesis* (2003, 2004) is based on UG. Ionin et al. (2004: 20) claim that:

“the state of L2-grammar is UG-constrained. L2-learners' errors are predicted to be non-random, but to reflect possible UG parameter settings. The FH states that errors in L2-data stem from the learners fluctuating between two or more parameter settings, some of which are not appropriate for the target language.”

Ionin et al. (2004) argue that L2 learners have got access to UG while acquiring the L2 articles and that they use articles based on the so-called *Article Choice Parameter*. This semantic parameter is applied by L2 learners to determine which article should be used. According to Ionin (2003, 2004, 2008, 2009), articles can be specified cross-linguistically on the basis of definiteness and specificity. There are languages that classify articles based on definiteness such as English and Dutch and languages that use articles based on specificity such as Samoan and some Creole languages (Ionin et al. 2004: 6-9). Ionin et al. (2004: 8, 10)⁶ distinguish four cases of Determiner Phrase (DP) that encode the feature [\pm definite][\pm specific]:

(5) [+definite][+specific]

I'd like to talk to *the winner of today's race* – she is my best friend!

(6) [+definite][-specific]

I'd like to talk to *the winner of today's race* – whoever that is; I'm writing a story about this race for the newspaper.

(7) [-definite][+specific]

Peter intends to marry *a merchant banker* – even though he doesn't get on at all with her.

(8) [-definite][-specific]

Peter intends to marry *a merchant banker* – though he hasn't met one yet.

However, there is some controversy about the use of specificity in definite NPs as proposed by Ionin et al. (2004) since specificity is usually discussed in relation to indefinite NPs (cf. Lyons 1999). Above that, Trenkić (2008: 6) argues that the categories of definiteness and specificity are not viewed here as universal cognitive concepts, but as discourse-related semantic features.

As long as L2 learners have not had enough L2 input, they tend to fluctuate between definiteness and specificity. According to Ionin et al. (2004: 10), the fluctuation manifests itself in the use of both possible parameter settings until the correct parameters are set by sufficient intensity of the L2 article use.

In view of the basic format of the Article Choice Parameter, the parameter is intended for languages with binary article distinction in which L2 learners can use the parameter to decide

⁶ Examples based on Ionin et al. (2004: 10) are originally from Lyons (1999: 176) and indicate also the indefinite referential use of demonstrative *this* as a marker of specificity in colloquial English.

which setting to choose (Ionin et al. 2004). In Dutch, on the other hand, there is also gender playing an essential role in the article use (see Chapter 2.2.2). Therefore, the Article Choice Parameter might help us understand the choice of the [\pm definite] article by considering possible fluctuation between definiteness and specificity, but not the choice of the final article in the L2 Dutch production as that depends on the gender of a noun as well.

Ionin et al. (2008) examined also article use by learners with an article-less L1. They argued that Russian learners of English have direct access to the semantic universals of UG causing their fluctuation and incorrect L2 article use in English influenced by specificity. Another conclusion of their study was that the L2 article production improves according to the learners' language level. The higher the language skill level is, the fewer errors the learners make.

1.2.2 Syntactic Misanalysis Account

Among the theories based on language transfer, Trenkić (2007, 2008, 2009) presented the *Syntactic Misanalysis Account*. It was proposed in order to account for variability in the article production in L2 English by Serbian learners. It is argued that problems experienced by L2 learners with an article-less L1 are caused by the morphosyntactic function of articles since L2 learners use other language features in their L1 to mark definiteness and specificity such as demonstratives or possessives. Above that, Trenkić (2009: 123) stresses that “their [determiners'] primary function is to express certain meanings, not to grammatically signal that a noun is coming, and in that particular sense languages without articles can be said not to have the syntactic category determiner“. For that reason, the learners struggle to acquire the L2 articles as syntactic determiners and focus on the meaning of articles.

It is worth mentioning that the claim that articles primarily emerge for processing and structural reasons rather than for semantic/pragmatic reasons (Hawkins 2004; Trenkić 2008) is in contradiction to the widely accepted assumption that articles have been developed in order to express definiteness (see Chapter 2.1).

According to Trenkić (2007, 2008, 2009), determiners can be, at least in languages without articles, viewed as *procedural adjectives* and L2 learners misanalyse the L2 articles as such. Trenkić (2007: 313) describes the production of articles in comparison with the production of adjectives as follows:

“Unlike in native-speaker production, where articles are semantically empty elements, and their insertion is purely syntactically motivated by the need to check off the uninterpretable feature [Def], in learner production articles are meaningful adjectives, accessed and produced as lexical words. Such production can be said to be pragmatically motivated, i.e. motivated by the perceived need to express the meaning

that articles encode in the learner's representation."

Using a written translation task, Trenkić (2007: 307-309) noticed an asymmetry between the use of articles for adjectivally modified nouns (*Art + Adj + N*) and nouns with no modifying adjective (*Art + N*). Figure 1.1 and 1.2 show the omission of definite article *the* and indefinite article *a(n)* in adjectivally modified and non-modified contexts. Based on the results, it is assumed that the presence of an adjective negatively affected the accuracy of the article production (Trenkić 2007: 308-309). Furthermore, it is clear that the levels of article omissions are high in both definite and indefinite contexts for the lower proficiency groups. In contrast, the omission is remarkably reduced in the article production of the higher proficiency groups.

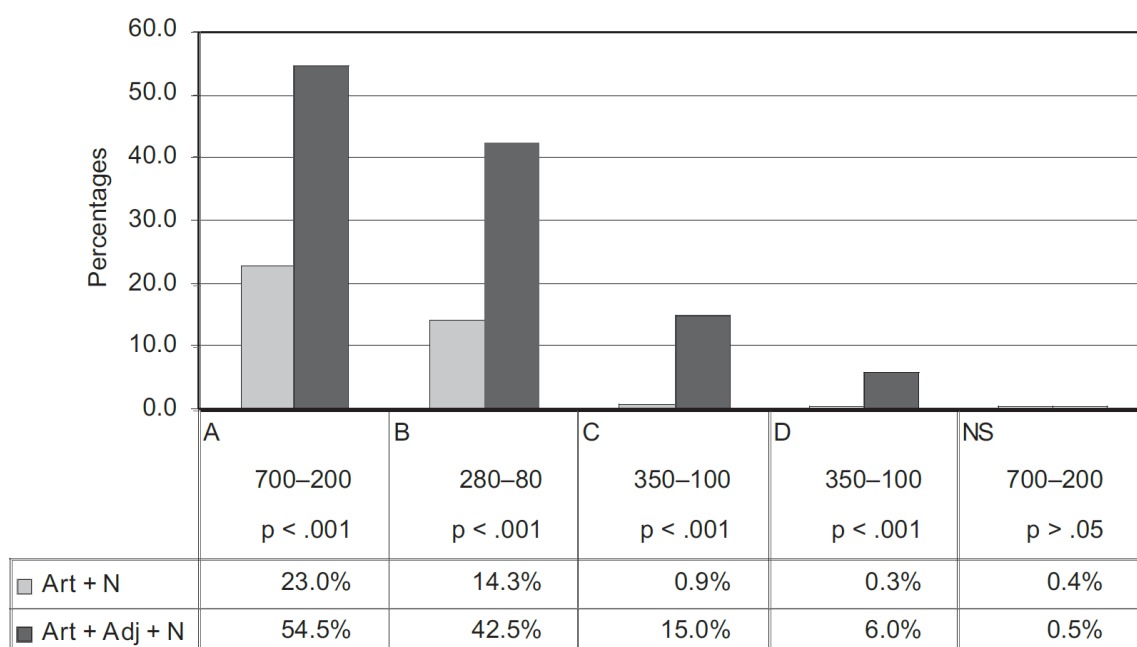


Figure 1.1: Omission of *the* in adjectivally modified and non-modified contexts (Trenkić 2007: 307)

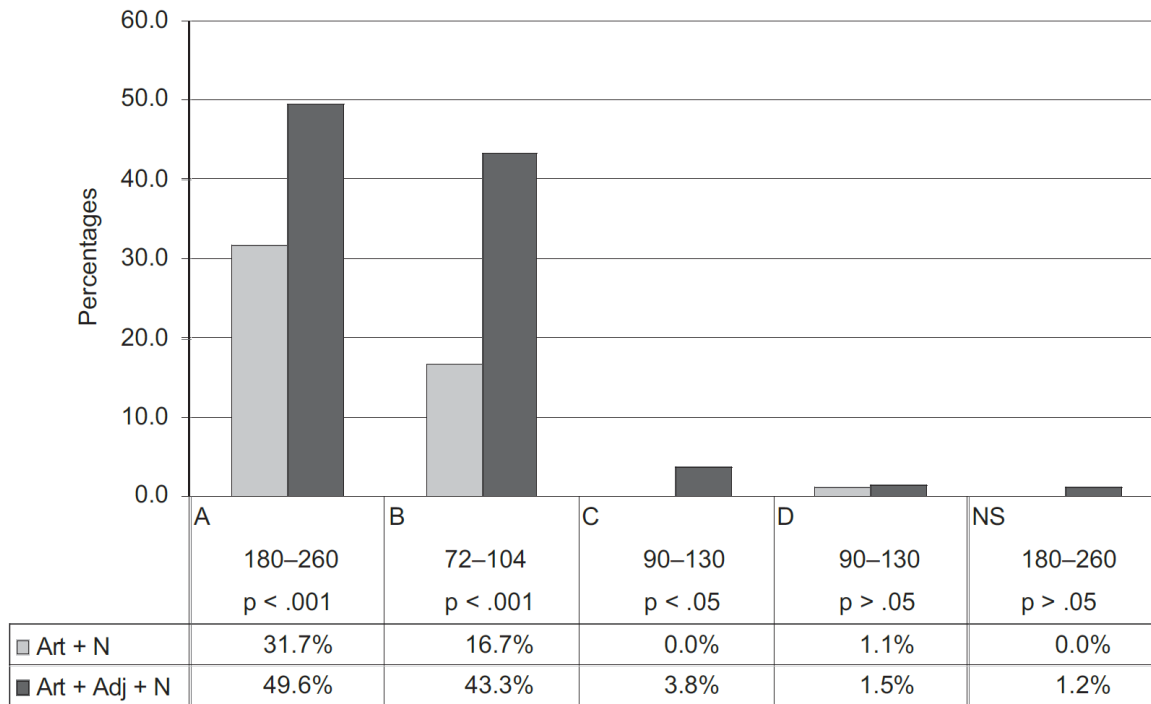


Figure 1.2: Omission of *a(n)* in adjectivally modified and non-modified contexts (Trenkić 2007: 308)

The proficiency phenomenon was already described earlier by Trenkić (2002: 115-116) who presumes that articles are omitted in a large number of contexts at low proficiency level. Gradually, omission is eliminated from the more advanced learner’s article production. However, variability in article production and substitution of articles might still appear (cf. Trenkić 2007, 2009).

1.2.3 Earlier research into article use by Czech learners

Article use in L2/FL by Czech learners did not get much attention in linguistic research of interlanguage production. Nevertheless, there are a few studies dealing with this phenomenon.

Pimingsdorfer (2010) examined article use in German by Czech learners and argued that the most observed errors were presented by omission. He claimed that the omission errors were caused “mainly by different avoidance strategies (also with attempted avoidance of case and especially gender errors) and by interference problems due to the complex divergence between L1 and L2 (negative interlingual transfer)”⁷ (Pimingsdorfer 2010: 147). Furthermore, he found

⁷ The original text is in German: “hauptsächlich mit unterschiedlichen Vermeidungsstrategien (auch mit versuchter Vermeidung von Kasus- und insb. Genus-Fehlern) sowie mit auf die komplexe Divergenz zwischen L1 und L2 zurückzuführenden Interferenzproblemen (negativer interlingualer Transfer)” (Pimingsdorfer 2010: 147).

many more errors in singular NPs than in plural ones. This phenomenon can partly be explained by the fact that there are only two possible basic forms in plural (a definite article or null article) in German, while the learners can choose from three forms in singular NPs.⁸ Pimingsdorfer (2010) observed also an incorrect use of definite articles instead of indefinite articles or null article, while substitution of an indefinite article instead of definite articles or null article occurred only in 5% of the cases. He argued that the article errors are resistant and, therefore, might be fossilized.

There are also a few studies looking into the article use in Dutch by Czech learners.⁹ Ungermannová (2015) carried out a study into the article use in Dutch by Czech learners based on 40 written letters of 21 beginners (first year university students of Dutch) and 19 intermediates (third year university students of Dutch). She found the article use in the interlanguage production of both language level groups resistant and contributed the observed errors to the negative transfer in view of the fact that Czech lacks the category of articles. However, it is admitted that the topic of the written task might have influenced the results causing a higher use of indefinite NPs (Ungermannová 2015: 77).

Furthermore, Baslerová (2016) examined the article use in Dutch by Czech learners testing the Fluctuation Hypothesis of Ionin et al. (2004, 2008).¹⁰ She argued that Czech learners of Dutch fluctuated between definiteness and specificity in their article use production. This claim was based on the observation that the FL learners overused the indefinite article in [+definite, -specific] condition and the definite article in [-definite, +specific] condition. It was also concluded that the fluctuation in the article use production improved based on the language proficiency level (Baslerová 2016: 107). Nevertheless, this result needs to be seen in the view of the fact that the proficiency level was determined on the basis of an obtained *Dutch as a Foreign Language Certificate (Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal)* which can only be obtained once a year. Therefore, it does not necessarily express the actual language proficiency level of the participants at the moment of the testing.

Finally, Kluková (2016) analysed a corpus of 20 written tasks of FL Dutch beginners (first

⁸ This excludes other forms of German articles determined by different cases.

⁹ Generally, the interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch has not yet been widely researched. Only a few studies are dealing with error analyses of this learner's group (see e.g. Janota 2001; Hrnčířová 2002; Engelbrecht 2008; Silbníková 2015).

¹⁰ Not only Czech learners but also Slovak learners participated in this study (Baslerová 2016: 102). Although Slovak, just like Czech, does not have the category of articles, it might have had an impact on the final results. Therefore, a separate analysis of these two groups might have been necessary.

year university students of Dutch). She stated that 70.7% of all errors were omission errors (see Table 1.1) which corresponds with the above-mentioned conclusion of Pimingsdorfer (2010). Above that, most of the omission errors (79.3%) were made in [-definite] context. These errors were explained based on negative transfer from L1.

	Omission errors	Substitution errors		Other type of error	Total
		Definiteness and specificity	Gender		
Number of errors	58	9	8	7	82
%	70.7%	10.9%	9.8%	8.6%	100%

Table 1.1: Error distribution by error type (Kluková 2016: 57)

1.3 Summarized theoretical basis

After having explored the existing theoretical background of the question of L2/FL acquisition and article use acquisition, we take the following theories as the basis for this research.

First, we presume an essential role of language transfer in L2/FL language acquisition (Van de Craats 2000; Hiligsmann et al. 2008; Ziemann et al. 2011; Schepens 2015). Although not all errors can be explained and predicted by a contrastive analysis, we believe that L1 significantly influences the L2/FL acquisition. This applies even more to adult language acquisition. As stated by Ellis (2015: 134): “Transfer of L1 grammatical forms is also less likely in younger than in older learners. Older learners may have an advantage when the source and target forms are similar and positive transfer occurs. However, when they are different, it can impede acquisition.” Therefore, we assume that article use acquired by adults with an article-less L1 might be characterised by more errors in the article use production than when acquired by children. On the other hand, other important factors in L2/FL acquisition need to be taken into account such as personal motivation, input and output skills and the learning environment. These factors might improve the final L2/FL production.

Second, we consider the article use by Czech learners in Dutch to be an interlanguage production following Selinker (1972, 1992). Based on that, we expect that interlanguage processes like overgeneralisation, simplification and imitation might be applied by the learners. Above that, we also assume that adult learners largely rely on the declarative memory while acquiring grammar of L2/FL instead of processing it based on grammar-driven strategies (Ullman 2001).

Finally, our research is partly based on the Syntactic Misanalysis Account (Trenkić 2007, 2008, 2009). This account takes the role of L1 as a starting point and explains some patterns in the article use by Serbian learners in English. We look into the assumption that articles emerge for processing and structural reasons rather than for semantic/pragmatic reasons (Hawkins 2004; Trenkić 2008). In chapter 3, we review this theoretical basis and reformulate it in view of the article use by Czech learners in Dutch.

Considering the above-mentioned arguments, the UG based theories such as the discussed Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996) or Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b) were not taken as a basis for this research since we do not assume that adult FL learners have got full or partial access to UG. According to these theories, adult learners might be able to acquire article use at a native-like level, but there is no clear evidence for this assumption within the article use acquisition research. From the UG based theories of L2/FL acquisition, only the Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin et al. 2004) will be explicitly tested within this research in order to be able to explore the role of specificity and to relate our results to the earlier research into article use by Czech learners (Ungermannová 2015; Baslerová 2016).

2 Definiteness

2.1 General definition

This chapter is devoted to presenting the concept of definiteness. The grammatical category of definiteness includes linguistic features to express whether an entity is already known to a hearer (definite) or still unknown (indefinite). While the majority of world languages mark definiteness of referents pragmatically (e.g. most Slavic languages and Finno-Ugric languages), some languages grammaticalize this category by using an overt grammatical marker such as a determiner (e.g. Germanic and Romance languages) (Lyons 1999; Hawkins 2004; Trenkić 2008).

Following Lyons (1999), we draw a distinction between the notion of semantic/pragmatic definiteness and grammatical definiteness. Semantic/pragmatic definiteness could be explained as identifiability. Identifiability is a category of meaning and it is universal (cf. Lambrecht 1994; Trenkić 2000). A referent of an expression which a speaker refers to is pragmatically definite when the hearer can identify it. Lyons (1999: 278) claims that identifiability is “an element in interpretation in all languages”. For example, demonstrative pronouns in any language encode semantic definiteness as part of their semantics, but this category of meaning is not overtly grammaticalized in all languages. In some languages, unstressed forms of demonstrative pronouns transformed into definite articles due to deflexion such as in Dutch (Van der Horst 2008: 388-392) (see Chapter 2.2). In other languages, the category of definiteness is not overtly grammaticalized by articles such as in Czech (see Chapter 2.3).

Therefore, another notion of definiteness is distinguished, namely the grammatical definiteness. Grammatical definiteness, or definiteness *strictu sensu* as called by Lyons, is “a morpho-syntactic category, grammaticalizing a pragmatic category of identifiability” (Lyons 1999: 282). It thus stands for the grammaticalization of the category of semantic/pragmatic definiteness as a structural representation of definiteness in syntax. This takes shape as overt definiteness marking and it is prototypically realised by articles. However, Lyons (1999: 276) also points out the following:

“It is generally the case that grammatical categories are not direct expressions of the semantic/pragmatic concepts which they can be said to be the grammaticalization of. When a concept comes to be represented grammatically it takes on a new life, with the result that the grammatical category created is not limited to expressing that concept. The original concept is likely, however, to continue to be the prototypical value of the grammatical category, so that the category can still be seen as expressing that concept in its central uses.”

He encounters the fact that even languages that do grammaticalize the semantic/pragmatic concept of identifiability may include cases of semantic/pragmatic identifiability, which are not grammatically definite. This applies for example to generics or proper names. Furthermore, there also may be some other cases in which the definite article is used and which will not relate to identifiability. Example (9), based on Lyons (1999: 10), shows a referent of a definite expression that has been labelled non-referential or attributive.

(9) We're offering several prizes, and *the winners* will be invited to London for the presentation.

Following Hawkins (1978), it is claimed that definiteness involves inclusiveness. Hereby it is referred to the totality of the objects or mass in the context satisfying the description, not to a set of identifiable referents. That means that the definite article *the* refers to all the winners in the competition. In case the NP is singular, inclusiveness is treated as uniqueness, because the totality of the objects that satisfy the description is just one (10).

(10) You are *the* first visitor to our new house.

According to Lyons (1999), the grammatical definiteness is structurally represented in the syntax of languages that grammaticalize this element in the form of the functional head D(efiniteness). This is in contradiction with the widely accepted DP hypothesis proposed by Abney (1987). The DP hypothesis claims that domain D refers to a class of determiners, rather than to the grammatical category of definiteness. As far as domain D is concerned, we follow the universal DP hypothesis in this research based on Broekhuis & Den Dikken (2012) and Veselovská (2014) in order to be able to compare this feature in the Dutch and Czech language (see Chapter 2.2 and 2.3).¹¹ Nevertheless, the distinction between semantic/pragmatic definiteness and grammatical definiteness is worth bearing in mind when considering what might affect the acquisition of L2/FL articles.

Ionin et al. (2004: 5) emphasize also the importance of specificity by defining definiteness

¹¹ Generally, there is a long ongoing debate on whether the DP or NP hypothesis should be used when defining the head of a noun phrase. An interesting overview of the applicable arguments for the DP analysis is given by Salzmann (2020) presenting a new argument in favour of the DP hypothesis based on data from hybrid agreement in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian.

and specificity as follows:

“If a Determiner Phrase (DP) of the form [D NP] is:

A. +definite, then the speaker and hearer presuppose the existence of a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP.

B. +specific, then the speaker intends to refer to a unique individual in the set denoted by the NP and considers this individual to possess some noteworthy property.”

Specificity is understood as the speaker’s intent to refer, regardless of whether it is morphologically marked in the language or not (cf. Trenkić 2008).

Pragmatic approaches to definiteness address the central questions of reference and existential presupposition in the communication that occurs in a certain context involving speaker and hearer (cf. Givón 1989; Lambrecht 1994; Lyons 1999; Trenkić 2000). Givón (1989: 206) emphasizes „the rather obvious pragmatic feature of definiteness (and of presupposition in general), namely that it involves assumptions the speaker makes about what the hearer knows, believes in, is familiar with or can identify”. It is generally agreed that the speaker’s assumptions about the hearer’s knowledge of a referent affect the form of the NP encoding the referent, while the knowledge of a referent refers to the hearer’s ability to identify the referent. The question is, however, what degree of knowledge of the referent the hearer has to have in order to be able to assume to be identifiable. Identifiability in pragmatic terms is not equated with knowing the identity of a referent, but rather with having some mental representation of it (cf. Lambrecht 1994). This difference of identifiability of a referent in the context and in an NP when expressed by articles might cause difficulties while acquiring L2/FL articles by learners with an article-less L1 (see Chapter 3).

2.2 Marking definiteness in Dutch

In Dutch, the category of definiteness is grammatically realised by articles. The article system depends on definiteness, number, countability, but also gender (see Chapter 2.2.2).

Articles in Dutch do not belong to the oldest Germanic lexicon since they only began to emerge in the Old Dutch period (Van der Horst 2008: 388-392). The definite articles *de* and *het* originated from unstressed use of demonstrative pronouns *die* (that) and *dat* (that) and the indefinite article from the numeral *een* (one). The development of articles was related to deflexion in the nominal domain. The deflexion process in Dutch went hand in hand with a more rigid word order, development of prepositions and conjunctions and grammaticalization of auxiliary verbs (Van der Horst 2008: 143). At present, on the other hand, there is a tendency

to omit articles in fixed expressions with prepositions such as in *met (het) oog op* (in view of) or *aan (de) hand van* (on the basis of), although the articles are grammatically correct in these expressions (Van der Horst 2010). Such omission of the definite article in fixed prepositional expressions is demonstrated by Van der Horst (2010: 71-75) on the basis of examples from Dutch newspapers.

Besides the omission of the definite article, another article use change has been detected recently. The definite article *het* is being replaced by *de* as the *de*-words form the majority of all words and the rules for applying *het* are not always transparent. This change is observed in the language production of not only L2 learners, but also native speakers. The article use acquisition is a difficult process within the language acquisition and gender marking still forms a stumbling block for L1 children until the seventh or eighth year. That process takes even longer in case one of the parents speaks another language (Cornips & Hulk 2006; Blom et al. 2008; Cornips 2012).

2.2.1 Article use

The grammatical category of article is part of the superior category of determiners. Within the generative framework, a determiner is taken to be the syntactic head of the determiner phrase (DP), which is located on the top of the structure of a noun phrase (NP). Schematically, it can be shown in the example *de blauwe auto* (11a) represented in labelled bracketing (11b) or in the tree diagram (11c) (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 675).

- (11) a. *de blauwe auto*
 the blue car
 b. [DP [D *de*] [NP *blauwe auto*]]
 c.
-
- ```

graph TD
 DP[DP] --- D[D]
 DP --- NP[NP]
 D --- de[de]
 NP --- blauwe[blauwe]
 NP --- auto[auto]

```

The determiner being the syntactic head determines the referential and/or quantificational properties and the syntactic distribution of the NP. There are two main types of determiners in Dutch, namely articles and pronouns.<sup>12</sup> These are in complementary distribution with each

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<sup>12</sup> Noun phrases can also be introduced by a cardinal numeral or a quantifier such as *sommige* (some) or *beide* (both).

other. Articles always stand in front of the core of the NP, although other elements can appear between the article and the core of the NP, such as an adjective (12). Articles can stand in front of a noun or a language element that can function as a noun, such as an infinitive (13), an independently used pronoun (14) or a substantiated adjective (15) (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 187, § 4.1.2)<sup>13</sup>.

- (12) Hij heeft *een groot* huis gekocht.  
He has bought *a big* house.
- (13) *Het heen en weer lopen* van mijn zus maakt me gek.  
My sister's walking back and forth drives me crazy.
- (14) Het is *een eerlijk iemand*.  
It is an honest person.
- (15) *De snelste* wint.  
The quickest wins.

Dutch distinguishes among three phonetically realised articles: two definite articles *de* and *het* and one indefinite article *een* as presented in Table 2.1. The definite articles are used based on gender and number. While *de* occurs with singular non-neuter and plural nouns, *het* is used with singular neuter. Both can be used for count and non-count nouns. The indefinite article *een* occurs only with singular count nouns. The phonetically empty null form  $\emptyset$  is considered the plural and non-count counterpart of the indefinite article *een*. To be complete, both *een* and  $\emptyset$  have a negative counterpart which is *geen* (no) in both cases (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 677-678).

|                   |            | Count nouns                   |                                | Non-count nouns             |
|-------------------|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                   |            | Singular                      | Plural                         |                             |
| <b>Definite</b>   | Non-neuter | <i>de</i> vrouw<br>the woman  | <i>de</i> vrouwen<br>the women | <i>de</i> wijn<br>the wine  |
|                   | Neuter     | <i>het</i> meisje<br>the girl | <i>de</i> meisjes<br>the girls | <i>het</i> bier<br>the beer |
| <b>Indefinite</b> | Non-neuter | <i>een</i> vrouw<br>a woman   | $\emptyset$ vrouwen<br>women   | $\emptyset$ wine<br>coffee  |

<sup>13</sup> In April 2021, the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst (ANS)* (General Dutch Grammar) was made available online (Beliën & Landsbergen 2021) and is currently being reviewed per each part. Due to the fact that the parts of the ANS used in this thesis have not yet been changed with respect to the previous ANS version (Haeseryn et al. 1997), we always refer to the source applicable for that specific part as advised in the online ANS.

|                 |            |                               |                                 |                             |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                 | Neuter     | <i>een</i> meisje<br>a girl   | Ø meisjes<br>girls              | Ø bier<br>beer              |
| <b>Negative</b> | Non-neuter | <i>geen</i> vrouw<br>no woman | <i>geen</i> vrouwen<br>no women | <i>geen</i> wine<br>no wine |
|                 | Neuter     | <i>geen</i> meisje<br>no girl | <i>geen</i> meisjes<br>no girls | <i>geen</i> bier<br>no beer |

Table 2.1: Overview of Dutch articles (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 678)

The definite and indefinite articles *de*, *het* and *een* are normally pronounced with a schwa /ə/. The *h* of *het* is not pronounced in an unstressed position. This phonologically reduced form of *het* can be expressed orthographically as 't which is also possible for the indefinite article *een* expressed as 'n. When the articles are stressed, they can be fully pronounced as [hət] and [e:n]. The indefinite article is then homophonous to the numeral *één* (one).

Dutch articles do not decline. However, there are three old case forms of the definite articles: *des*, *der* and *den* that still occur in some fixed expressions (16) and formal language use (17) (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 187-188, § 4.1.3).<sup>14</sup>

- (16)      *de* tand *des* tijds                      *in* naam *der* wet                      *op* *den* duur  
the test of time                      in the name of the law                      eventually
- (17)      Het besluit is genomen met een meerderheid *der* uitgebrachte stemmen.  
The decision is made by a majority of the votes cast.

The indefinite article has got also some old case forms, namely *eens* (genitive masculine and neuter) and *ener* (genitive feminine), e.g. *in eens geestes zijn* (to agree). However, these forms are archaic and are hardly used (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 188, § 4.1.3).

### 2.2.1.1 Functions of articles

Definite articles are generally used to refer to some entity in the domain of discourse (domain D), whereas the indefinite articles are generally used to introduce a new entity into domain D. The definite articles *de* and *het* refer to an NP, which is according to the speaker identifiable for the hearer. The speaker can expect the hearer to identify the referent from the

<sup>14</sup> The old case forms of the definite articles occur also in combination with other words, e.g. with the proposition *te* as in *ter gelegenheid van* (on the occasion of) or *ten gunste van* (in favour of) (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 188, § 4.1.3).

context, from the situation and/or based on the general knowledge of the world. The indefinite article is used by the speaker when he/she expects the hearer not to identify the referent. The null form can introduce an indefinite core of the NP in plural or non-count (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 802-807, § 14.3.1).

- (18) Er staat *een man* achter *de deur*. *De man* is op zoek naar je broer.  
There is a man behind the door. The man is looking for your brother.
- (19) *De zon* schijnt.  
The sun shines.
- (20) Morgen moeten we  $\emptyset$  *bloemen* en  $\emptyset$  *koffie* kopen.  
We have to buy flowers and coffee tomorrow.

*Een* in (18) introduces the new NP *man* (man). The NP *deur* (door) does not need any introduction as it is clear out of the context or the situation which door the speaker means. Therefore, the definite article is used in this case. After having introduced the NP, the definite article *de* is used in order to refer to the entity *man* (man). *De* in (19) refers to a unique entity, which is sufficiently identifiable for the hearer based on his general knowledge of the world. The null article in (20) is used in front of *bloemen* (flowers), as this core of the NP is newly introduced and plural, and in front of *koffie* (coffee) as this is non-count.

Besides the definite and indefinite NPs, articles introduce also categorical and generic NPs (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 807-812, § 14.3.2):

- (21) We hebben *een walvis* gezien tijdens onze vakantie. (indefinite)  
We saw a whale during our holiday.
- (22) *Een walvis* is een zoogdier. (categorical)  
A whale is a mammal.
- (23) *De Tsjech* heeft mij vandaag een goede grap verteld. (definite)  
The Czech told me a good joke today.
- (24) *De Tsjech* heeft een eigenaardig gevoel voor humor. (generic)  
*The Czech* has a peculiar sense of humour.

In (21), a random, indefinite member from the class of all whales is mentioned. Therefore,

it concerns an indefinite noun phrase.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, a whale in (22) indicates the category of whales. The categorical noun phrase can also be expressed by using the null article:

(25) *Walvissen* zijn zoogdieren. (categorical)

Whales are mammals.

(26) *Brood* is goud. (categorical)

Bread is gold.

In (23), a particular member is named from the class of all Czechs. Therefore, it concerns a definite noun phrase. In (24), on the other hand, the speaker talks about all Czechs together as a species. One abstracts from individual cases and generally refers to the whole class.

To sum up, definite and indefinite articles may perform several functions (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 688-708). Definite articles can be used referentially to point out a certain entity or a set of entities from domain D. The set of entities can be seen in a distributive manner as a set of individuals or in a collective manner as a group. Furthermore, definite articles can be used generically in order to refer to (the prototype of) a class. Indefinite articles may be presentational when introducing a new entity into domain D, or non-presentational when referring to an entity which is not assumed to be identifiable by the hearer. In both categories, specific and non-specific articles can be distinguished. A specific NP includes an entity, which is known to the speaker, whereas a non-specific NP refers to an entity which is not identifiable for the speaker. Finally, indefinite articles can also be used generically when dealing with categorical NPs. The classification of Dutch articles is shown in Figure 2.1.

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<sup>15</sup> The difference between indefinite and categorical NPs shows a connection between the choice of the noun phrase and the verb phrase and the indefiniteness or categoriality of the noun phrase since the combination of the subject and the predicate can be limited (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 808-809, § 14.3.2.2):

(i) Er zijn walvissen te zien.

\*Walvissen zijn te zien.

Whales can be seen.

(ii) Er is brood gesneden.

\*Brood is gesneden.

Bread has been cut.

The word *er* (there) signals indefiniteness at the beginning of the sentences. This specific verb phrase is used in order to overtly show that no reference is made to the category itself. Some indefinite whales might be seen, but it is not an inherent characteristic of the whole category. In contrast, the NPs in the sentences *De walvissen zijn te zien* (The whales can be seen) and *Het brood is gesneden* (The bread has been cut) are definite, since they refer to concrete whales and concrete bread.

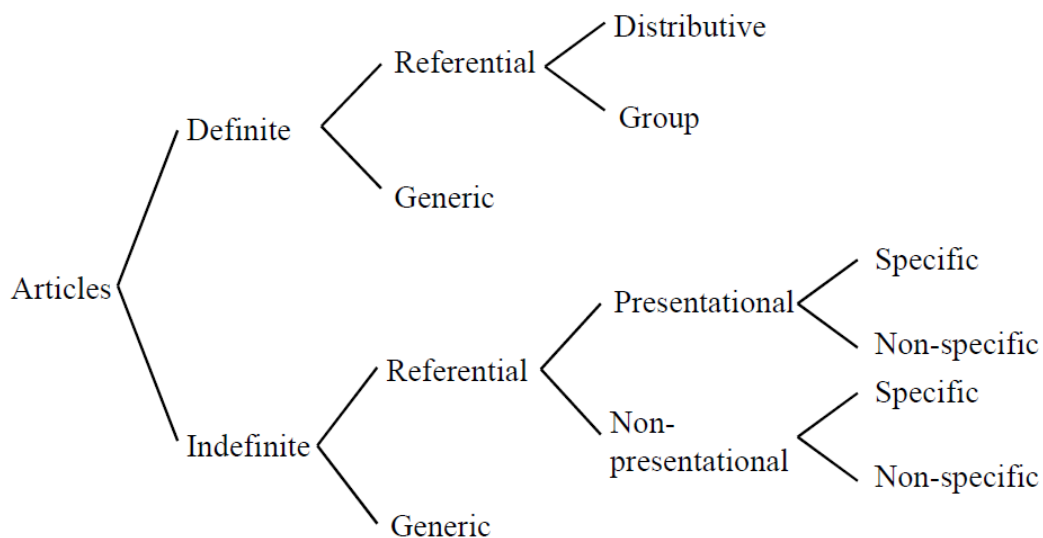


Figure 2.1: Classification of Dutch articles (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 708)

### 2.2.1.2 Special use of articles

Besides the above-described regular use of articles, there are also some special cases of the article use. The following paragraphs are based on Haeseryn et al. (1997: 191-223, § 4.3-4.6).

#### 2.2.1.2.1 Special use of definite articles

The definite articles can be stressed in order to refer to a person or thing characterised as par excellence:

- (27) *Zij is **dé** vrouw voor deze baan.*  
 She is the woman for this job.

Furthermore, the definite articles can be used with a distributive meaning in NPs that mention measure and time markers:

- (28) *Voor de boeken betaal je twee euro **het** stuk.*  
 You pay two euro each for the books.
- (29) *Om de twee weken moeten we bij elkaar komen.*  
 We must meet every two weeks.

The definite articles can be used in a distributive manner in other NPs as well. In (30), the

distributive use means that each individual student has to write a letter:<sup>16</sup>

- (30) *De studenten moeten een brief schrijven.*  
The students must write a letter.

Finally, the definite article *de* can be used in preposition phrases with a definite cardinal number that mostly expresses age (31). In other cases, it is usually facultative (32).

- (31) Hij zal rond *de veertig* zijn.  
He will be around forty.
- (32) De taak moet binnen (*de tien*) dagen afgerond zijn.  
The task must be completed within ten days.

#### 2.2.1.2.2 Special use of indefinite articles

The indefinite article *een* is used in noun combinations of type *een A van een B*<sup>17</sup> when comparing B to A and saying that B is like A:

- (33) Hij is *een schat van een kind*.  
He is a lovely child.

The indefinite article *een* (or the reduced form 'n) can be used for nouns in plural or non-counts in exclamative constructions:

- (34) *Wat een kinderen zijn er geweest!*  
There were lots of children!
- (35) 'n Boeken dat zij hebben!

---

<sup>16</sup> In fact, the example (30) is ambiguous, because one of the possible readings besides the distributive reading is also the collective reading. That would mean that the students have to write a letter together. In Dutch, an adverbial phrase like *allemaal* (all) or *samen* (together) can be added to force on the distributive or collective reading:

- (i) De studenten moeten *allemaal een brief* schrijven.  
The students must all write a letter.
- (ii) De studenten moeten *samen een brief* schrijven.  
The students must write a letter together.

<sup>17</sup> This type of a noun phrase with a preposition phrase has got a fixed structure [determiner 1 – noun 2 – preposition 3 – determiner 4 – noun 5]. Other examples can be *een boom van een kerel* (a sturdy man) or *een zaal van een slaapkamer* (a big bedroom).

They have got an enormous amount of books!

The indefinite article *een* (or *zo 'n*) is used as *ongeveer* (approximately).

- (36) Er zullen *een* dertig deelnemers zijn.  
There will be about thirty participants.
- (37) Hij heeft *zo 'n* twintig huizen gebouwd.  
He has built about twenty houses.

### 2.2.1.2.3 Omitting articles

Articles are mostly omitted in powerful formulations such as commands (38), headlines (39), titles of books (40) etc.

- (38) *Handen omhoog!*  
Hands up!
- (39) Europese verbazing over *sterke toename besmettingen*  
European amazement about strong increase in infections
- (40) *Nederlands handboek*  
Dutch handbook

Omission takes place in coordinative constructions of two and more nouns that form a fixed expression (41) and/or are semantically related (42). The omissions are obligatory in the most fixed expressions and facultative in the semantically related coordinative constructions.

- (41) Hij zit op *water en brood*.  
He is in prison.
- (42) *(De) vader en (de) zoon* zijn neergestoken.  
(The) father and (the) son have been stabbed.

The article can be omitted after prepositions in non-referential noun phrases, locational and other (idiomatic) expressions. It concerns combinations with the prepositions *per*, *qua* and *te* (in), where articles are always omitted (43).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, there are combinations with the

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<sup>18</sup> The prepositions *per* and *qua* come originally from Latin that does not use any articles. In the case of *te* (in), the



preposition *zonder* (without) (44), parallel constructions (45), locational constructions (46) and other idiomatic expressions (47).

- (43) De kaarten worden altijd *per post* verzonden.  
The cards are always sent by post.
- (44) *Zonder bril* kan ik niet scherp zien.  
I cannot see clearly without glasses.
- (45) Zij lopen vaak *hand in hand*.  
They often walk hand in hand.
- (46) Zij gaan niet *naar kantoor* en blijven *vanuit huis* werken.  
They do not go to the office and continue working from home.
- (47) Uw werkgever mag u alleen *op staande voet* ontslaan als hij een geldige reden heeft.  
Your employer may only dismiss you with immediate effect if he has got a valid reason.

The article is often absent in NPs with a unique reference that can be unambiguously identified. The following cases can be distinguished: nouns with a proper noun (48)<sup>19</sup>, nouns with a letter and/or number (49), kinship names (50), nouns preceded by adjectives as *bedoeld(e)*, *(boven)genoemd(e)* etc. (51) and some other nouns mostly in formal language use (52).

- (48) *paus Franciscus, kroonprinses Catharina-Amalia, meneer Douma*  
Pope Francis, Crown Princess Catharina-Amalia, Mister Douma
- (49) *Bus 6* stopt niet bij het ziekenhuis.  
Bus 6 does not stop at the hospital.
- (50) *Grootmoeder* komt morgen op bezoek.

---

omission is a moderner phenomenon as showed in the expressions *ten huize van* (at the home of) and *ter plaatse* (on the spot). Loonen (2003) argues that recently formed prepositions such as *hartje* (heart) tend to occur without any article:

- (i) Hij woont *hartje* stad.  
He lives in the heart of the city.

<sup>19</sup> Proper nouns designating a person can be preceded by a qualifying noun without an article. However, this should not refer to nationality or life philosophy and it should not be subjective. Such combinations have to include an article: *de Nederlander Van Houten* (the Dutchman Van Houten), *de moslim Abdollah* (the Muslim Abdollah), *het generaal Kluková* (the general Kluková).

Grandmother comes to visit tomorrow.

(51) Wij verwijzen u naar *bovengenoemd artikel*. (formal)

Please refer to the above-mentioned article.

(52) *Ondergetekende* verklaart hierbij akkoord te gaan met de overeenkomst. (formal)

The undersigned hereby declares to agree with the agreement.

The article is omitted in salutations (53), except the formula *meneer/mevrouw de* + noun expressing names of professions and functions such as *ambassadeur* (ambassador), *directeur* (director), *voorzitter* (chairman) etc. (54).

(53) *Mevrouw*, kunt u mij vertellen waar het postkantoor is?

Madam, can you tell me where the post office is?

(54) *Meneer de ambassadeur*, zou u even kunnen wachten op de consul?

Ambassador, could you wait a moment for the consul?

Omission occurs in nouns forming a nominal part of the predicate in case the NPs express a characteristic qualification such as profession, function, nationality or life philosophy (55).<sup>20</sup>

(55) Peter is *leraar*.

Peter is a teacher.

Noun phrases without an article occur as a predicative adjunct, especially when introduced by *als* (as) or *tot* (to). It abstracts from a concrete person or thing and emphasises the qualification such as profession, function etc. (56).<sup>21</sup>

(56) *Als taalkundige* werd hij verkozen *tot voorzitter* van de raad.

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<sup>20</sup> The NPs in a predicate can also be used with an article. In that case, it might express a subjective judgment or appreciation as it refers to an individual with a certain profession while the qualification without the article is considered objective. We refer to a profession of the person as to a fact in (i), while we attribute certain characteristics of an artist to the person in (ii), although this person does not have to be an artist by profession.

(i) Willem is *artiest* (van beroep).  
Willem is an artist (by profession).

(ii) Willem is *een artiest*.  
Willem is an artist.

<sup>21</sup> Referring to footnote 20, also in this case an article can be used in order to express a judgment or appreciation:

(i) Zij gedraagt zich *als een echte rechter*.  
She acts like a real judge.

He as a linguist was elected chairman of the board.

The article is omitted in NPs that indicate children's game (57) or musical instruments, but only in non-referential use (58a and 58b).

- (57) De kinderen spelen graag *verstoppertje*.  
The children like to play hide and seek.
- (58) a. Mijn broer speelt *viool*.  
My brother plays the violin.  
b. Mijn broer speelt *de viool* in het strijktrio.  
My brother plays the violin in the string trio.

In general, the article is often omitted in fixed expressions with verbs such as *betrekking hebben op* (to relate to), *rekening houden met* (to take into account), *toegang hebben tot* (to have access to) etc.

In some types of nouns, the article sometimes occurs and sometimes does not. As mentioned earlier (see example (48)), the article is omitted in NPs with a proper name (59).<sup>22</sup>

- (59) Er is een nieuw boek van *Tommy Wieringa* uitgegeven.  
A new book by Tommy Wieringa has been published.

As far as geographical names are concerned, the article is omitted in the names of continents, nations, states, islands, provinces, cities and towns, unless they are in plural or indicate the form of government (60). On the other hand, the names of mountains, forests and water go always with an article (61).

- (60) *Centraal-Europa, Nederland, Ameland, Zuid-Holland, Gouda, Giethoorn, de Verenigde Staten, het Verenigd Koninkrijk*

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<sup>22</sup> However, one uses an indefinite article in the names of famous persons to indicate an example (i) or in the form *ene* in the meaning of *a certain* (ii), which is sometimes meant pejoratively.

- (i) *Een Mondriaan* is tegenwoordig niet te kopen.  
A Mondriaan cannot be bought nowadays.
- (ii) Gisteren heb ik *ene Marjolein de Groot* gesproken.  
I spoke to a certain Marjolein de Groot yesterday.

Central Europe, the Netherlands, Ameland, South Holland, Gouda, Giethoorn,  
the United States, the United Kingdom

- (61) *de Mont Blanc, de Ardennen, het Zwarte Woud, de Noordzee, de Rijn*  
Mont Blanc, the Ardennes, the Black Forest, the North Sea, the Rhine

Temporal proper names, the names of months, days (except some special cases), holidays and time indications are mostly used without an article (62), whereas the names of periods are combined with an article (63).<sup>23</sup>

- (62) *januari, vrijdag, Kerstmis* or *(de) Kerst, Pasen, middernacht, zonsondergang*  
January, Friday, Christmas, Easter, midnight, sunset

- (63) *de advent, de ramadan, de middeleeuwen*  
Advent, Ramadan, the Middle Ages

The article is used in the names of buildings, monuments, squares, streets, parks etc. (64). The same applies also to the names of organisations, associations, (government) institutions, administrative units or movements (65). Compared to that, the article in the names of companies is used non-systematically with or without an article (66).

- (64) *het Binnenhof, het Atomium, de Dam, het Vondelpark*  
the Binnenhof, the Atomium, the Dam, the Vondelpark

- (65) *de Verenigde Naties, de Consumentenbond, de VVD (de Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie), de gemeente Utrecht, het Christendom*  
the United Nations, the Consumentenbond (Consumer's Association), the VVD (the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), the municipality of Utrecht, Christianity

- (66) *de HEMA, de KLM, (de) Shell, Philips, Unilever*

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<sup>23</sup> The nouns like *week* (week), *maand* (month), *jaar* (year) and the names of seasons can be used with a definite article or without an article if these are accompanied by *vorig(e)* (previous), *volgend(e)* (next) and *komend(e)* (coming) and if the period is indicated as the closest before or after the speaking moment (i). The same applies for the names of days followed by *daarvoor* (before that), *daarna* (after that) or *daarop* (thereafter). In some temporal indications, the definite article became part of the genitive form (ii).

- (i) *(De) komende zomer* gaan wij niet naar België.  
We will not be going to Belgium (this) coming summer.  
(ii) *Zij werkt het liefst 's ochtends*.  
She prefers to work in the morning.

HEMA, KLM, Shell, Philips, Unilever

In the names of newspapers, magazines etc., the article usually occurs if the proper name is derived from a generic name (which requires the article) and when that generic name is still recognizable (67). In other cases, the article is omitted (68a), unless it concerns a specific copy or sort (68b).

(67) *de Volkskrant, de Morgen*  
de Volkskrant, de Morgen

(68) a. Panorama, Lingua  
Panorama, Lingua  
b. Heb jij *de Lingua* al gelezen?  
Have you read the Lingua yet?

Generally, an article is mostly used in proper names when accompanied by an adjunct (69a and 69b).

(69) a. *De in Amsterdam geboren Renate Dorrestein* debuteerde als romancier met de roman *Buitenstaanders*.  
The Amsterdam-born Renate Dorrestein made her debut as a novelist with the novel *Outsiders*.  
b. Wij zijn gisteren aangekomen in *een regenachtig Den Haag*.  
We arrived yesterday in rainy The Hague.

Also the names of languages belong to the special cases. They are not accompanied by an article (70) since it concerns a non-count.<sup>24</sup> However, an article can be used when referring to a specific language production or a specific type of language (71).

(70) Mijn man spreekt vloeiend *Nederlands*.

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<sup>24</sup> In case the name of a language refers to a language system, the article (non)-use becomes idiomatic. In some cases, the article has to be used obligatorily (i) and in other cases, the article has to be omitted (ii).

- (i) Dit boek is *uit het Nederlands in het Tsjechisch* vertaald.  
This book has been translated from Dutch into Czech.  
(ii) Ik heb *Nederlands* gestudeerd.  
I studied Dutch.

- My husband speaks Dutch fluently.
- (71) In Oostenrijk wordt *een heel ander Duits* gesproken dan in Duitsland.  
A very different German is spoken in Austria than in Germany.

### 2.2.2 Grammatical gender

Grammatical gender, also called noun class, is a lexical property of nouns. According to Corbett (1991, 2005), this nominal classification is based on semantic, morphological and phonological grounds. The most common number of genders is currently two, but the Indo-European languages originally distinguished among three grammatical genders including masculine, feminine and neuter.

Also Dutch had originally three genders. However, the distinction between masculine and feminine gender has changed into one common gender. Therefore, modern standard Dutch has got the common (*zijdig*) and the neuter (*onzijdig*) gender. In the plural, no gender distinction is made at all as only the definite article *de* is used. This applies also to the indefinite article since only *een* is used in the singular.<sup>25</sup> The common and neuter gender are marked on definite articles, attributive adjectives and relative and demonstrative pronouns (see more in 2.2.2.1), whereas the three-way gender distinction can still be found in personal and possessive pronouns.<sup>26</sup>

The so-called *de-woorden* (words with the article *de*) are further divided into masculine and feminine words. The group of Dutch common nouns represents the majority of all words, namely roughly 75%, while only 25% of all Dutch words are neuter (Haeseryn et al. 1997; Cornips & Hulk 2008). Van Berkum (1996: 24) argues based on his lexical-statistical analyses of the CELEX Dutch lexicon V3.1 that the overall ratio varies from 3:1 to 2:1 depending on the counting method.<sup>27</sup>

The Dutch grammatical gender is known for causing difficulties not only in the L2/FL acquisition of both children and adult learners, but also in the L1 acquisition (Blom et al. 2008; Cornips & Hulk 2008; Orgassa & Weerman 2008; Ziemann et al. 2011).

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<sup>25</sup> In case an attributive adjective is added to an NP, the gender distinction is visible in the ending of the adjective:

- (i) Haar vriend is op zoek naar een *nieuwe* baan.  
Her boyfriend is looking for a new job.
- (ii) Zij hebben een *nieuw* huis gekocht.  
They have bought a new house.

<sup>26</sup> The development of the Dutch gender system can be found in van Leuvensteijn et al. (1997).

<sup>27</sup> The CELEX Dutch lexicon V3.1 consisted of 130.788 word entries based on a running text corpus of some 42 million words (Van Berkum 1996: 23).

Various research shows that even L1 children until the age of six years have problems with the neuter gender and overgeneralise the definite article *de* in NPs where *het* is required (Van Kempen & Wijnen 2000; Blom et al. 2008; Cornips & Hulk 2008). As pointed out by Cornips & Hulk (2008: 270), this unidirectional overgeneralisation and the late age at which L1 children acquire gender in Dutch is unique in comparison with other languages such as German or French. In these languages, no such specific problems have been reported during the acquisition. Possible reasons for that might be the fact that the saliency of grammatical gender on D in Dutch is very low. That means that the grammatical gender is not evident in the morphology of the nouns. However, there are some exceptions with respect to the saliency of grammatical gender in Dutch such as diminutives. Diminutives are all morphologically marked by the suffix *-je* on the noun and all get *het* regardless of the lexical gender of the noun:<sup>28</sup>

|      |             |                        |         |                                         |
|------|-------------|------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------|
| (72) | non-neuter: | de bloem<br>the flower | neuter: | <i>het</i> bloempje<br>the small flower |
| (73) | neuter:     | het boek<br>the book   | neuter: | <i>het</i> boekje<br>the small book     |

The higher saliency triggers the correct gender production and helps learners acquire the grammatical gender feature in Dutch (cf. Cornips & Hulk 2008).

Cornips & Hulk (2008) researched the factors of success and failure in the acquisition of grammatical gender of Dutch of bilingual children. They argue that the role of language input might be crucial when acquiring gender in Dutch. Following Sorace (2005), they assume that:

*“...quantitative differences in the input are likely to affect processing abilities because of fewer opportunities to integrate syntax and other knowledge in interpretation and production, whereas qualitative differences may affect representations because of insufficient evidence for interface mappings. Importantly, the acquisition of the gender feature as expressed in the definite determiner involves the interface between the lexicon and morphosyntax”* (Cornips & Hulk 2008: 278).

The quantity of language input plays a role in the article production of children whose home language is not standard Dutch, whereas the quality of language input might be a significant factor in the article acquisition of children whose parents learnt L2 Dutch. Generally, children need to be exposed to a correct article use in order to acquire gender correctly (Cornips & Hulk

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<sup>28</sup> The diminutive suffix *-je* and its allomorphs is one of the most productive nominal affixes in Dutch. Its phonetic realisation depends on the phonological properties of the stem. We distinguish the following diminutive affixes: *-je*, *-tje*, *-etje*, *-pje*, *-kje* (Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 107-108).

2008: 280-282). Assuming that adult learners of Dutch in the Czech Republic are not exposed to a comparable quantity of language input and might be given explicit instructions by FL teachers, both the quantity and quality of language input might play a significant role in the acquisition of grammatical gender in Dutch.

Blom et al. (2008) carried out speech production experiments on Dutch grammatical gender done with Dutch L1 children, Moroccan child L2 learners of Dutch and Moroccan adult L2 learners of Dutch. They concluded that adult learners applied lexicon-based learning strategies, whereas children utilised grammar-based learning (cf. Ullman 2001, 2004). Their conclusion is formulated based on asymmetry observed in the use of adjectives between the three groups. While child participants overgeneralised one particular suffix, adult participants applied both adjectival forms incorrectly. It is assumed that the adult participants could not rely on lexicon-based frames since such rules fail to account for gender distinctions in Dutch adjectives.

In the adult acquisition of grammatical gender, also the role of L1 is often addressed distinguishing two main perspectives. First, learners can acquire grammatical gender in L2/FL regardless of whether their L1 knows this feature (White et al. 2001). Second, learners cannot acquire the target-like gender use due to functional feature of their L1 (Franceschina 2005). In addition to that, Sabourin et al. (2006) argue that the gender system in L1 and L2/FL should be closely related in order to be able to acquire this feature. They investigated the L2 acquisition of Dutch by three different groups of L1 learners, namely German, English and a Romance language (French, Italian or Spanish), and stated that the German learners showed the best gender production in Dutch. Based on that, they suggested that the morphosyntactic overlap between the Dutch and German gender systems positively influenced the acquisition. Besides that, overgeneralizing occurred in the neuter gender of all groups in middle frequency words while choosing the common gender as the default.

Generally, two types of transfer can be distinguished, namely *surface transfer* and *deep transfer*. Surface transfer refers to the direct transfer of a morphologically similar gender system between L1 and L2/FL, which are congruent to each other. Deep transfer, on the other hand, is presented by the transfer of the category gender not depending on the congruence of the gender systems. Sabourin et al. (2006: 12) argue that both surface transfer and deep transfer can be advantageous for the learner, but surface transfer proved to be more helpful in the acquisition of lexical gender as seen in the better gender production of the German learners of Dutch. Therefore, Sabourin et al. (2006: 1) concluded that “L2 acquisition of grammatical gender is affected more by the morphological similarity of gender marking in the L1 and L2 than by the presence of abstract syntactic gender features in the L1.”



The research shows that the L2/FL gender production is affected by L1 and can primarily be improved by a higher exposure to L2/FL since high frequency words are more likely to be dealt with grammatically (Franceschina 2001; Sabourin et al. 2006). Furthermore, the type of memory, surface transfer and deep transfer play a large role in the initial stages of L2/FL acquisition.

### 2.2.2.1 Congruency and grammatical gender in Dutch

Grammatical gender in Dutch does not only apply to articles, but also to adjectives, demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns. While the grammatical gender of nouns is not completely transparent, there are fixed rules for the inflection of adjectives (Ziemann et al. 2011). An attributively used adjective in congruency with a noun has got an ending *-e*, unless it concerns an indefinite neuter noun in singular. In that case a zero ending is used. Furthermore, a zero ending is also applied in predicative use of adjectives (see Table 2.2).

|                        | <b>Non-neuter</b>                              | <b>Neuter</b>                               | <b>Plural</b>                                       |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Attributive use</b> |                                                |                                             |                                                     |
| <b>Definite</b>        | <i>de grote tafel</i><br>the big table         | <i>het oude boek</i><br>the old book        | <i>de nieuwe huizen</i><br>the new houses           |
| <b>Indefinite</b>      | <i>een grote tafel</i><br>a big table          | <i>een oud boek</i><br>an old book          | <i>nieuwe huizen</i><br>new houses                  |
| <b>Predicative use</b> |                                                |                                             |                                                     |
| <b>Definite</b>        | <i>De tafel is groot.</i><br>The table is big. | <i>Het boek is oud.</i><br>The book is old. | <i>De huizen zijn nieuw.</i><br>The houses are new. |
| <b>Indefinite</b>      | <i>Een tafel is groot.</i><br>A table is big.  | <i>Een boek is oud.</i><br>A book is old.   | <i>Huizen zijn groot.</i><br>Houses are old.        |

Table 2.2: Adjectival inflection in Dutch

This research only focuses on implications of grammatical gender on articles, no other word sorts. Therefore, the acquisition and knowledge of such grammatical rules is not further addressed.

## 2.3 Marking definiteness in Czech

In Czech, the category of definiteness is not marked by any specific lexical elements, such as in Dutch. Like most Slavic languages, Czech does not have the category of articles (Comrie & Corbett 2002). This implies that the category of meaning is not grammaticalized and the

syntactic feature [Def] is lacking (Hawkins 2004; Trenkić 2007, 2008, 2009).

However, following Veselovská (1995, 2001, 2014), we assume that:

*“the presence of an overt article is not required for a nominal entry to be analysed as referential, qualifiable, argumental and to be able to bind an anaphor. Thus Czech nominal phrases should be analyzed as containing a functional projection DP, in spite of the fact that the D head does not host an overt free morpheme”* (Veselovská 2014: 14).

Czech shows properties in the areas of semantics, morphology and syntactic distribution that can be explained using the universal DP hypothesis as proposed by Abney (1987). The universality of this hypothesis is in contradiction to the proposal of Corver (1990) who suggested a variation in domain D for article-less languages. He claims that the extraction of focused adjectival modifiers is caused by a missing D projection in the Slavic languages (see also Trenkić 2004). In contrast, Veselovská (1995) analysed the extractions in terms of remnant movement avoiding the Determiner and Prepositional Phrase (DP/PP) split and hereby supporting the universal DP hypothesis (Veselovská 2014: 12).<sup>29</sup> Veselovská (2014: 28) supported the presence of a Czech equivalent of the functional domain above the NP by comparing the properties of the field of determiner and premodifiers.

### 2.3.1 Language features expressing definiteness

In Czech, the category of (in)definiteness is mostly clear from the context. Czech is a highly inflected synthetic language. Thanks to its rich case system, particular phrases are easily identifiable and the word order in Czech is rather free (Hlavsa 1972; Daneš et al. 1987; Grepl et al. 1995). Based on the freer word order, (in)definiteness can be expressed on the basis of the topic and comment principle (Daneš et al. 1987: 387).<sup>30</sup> This can be compared to the Dutch left-right principle.<sup>31</sup> This principle implies that the informational value of phrases increases from left to right. Because of this, the topic (theme) is usually considered definite and the comment (rheme), in which new information is introduced, is usually considered indefinite. Examples

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<sup>29</sup> Similar analyses are argued to be applicable also in other Slavic languages (Bašić 2004; Petrović 2011).

<sup>30</sup> The topic and comment principle is also called theme-rheme bipartition in the Czech terminology according to the *Functional Sentence Perspective* (FSP) (cf. Hlavsa 1972; Mathesius 1975; Firbas 1992).

<sup>31</sup> The word order can also play a role in Dutch with regard to the distinction between (in)definiteness and (non-)specificity. Compare examples (i) and (ii) in view of the subject's position and specificity.

- (i) Er belt *een meisje* elke dag. [-definite][-specific]  
There is a girl calling every day.
- (ii) *Een meisje* belt elke dag. [-definite][+specific]  
A girl calls every day.

(74) and (75) illustrate the referential relations in Czech expressed by word order.

(74) *Dívka* chodila často do knihovny.  
Girl went often to the library  
The girl often went to the library.

(75) Do knihovny chodila často *dívka*.  
To the library went often girl  
A/the girl went often to the library.

The subject in (74) is thematic and the reference can only be definite and specific, whereas the NP in (75) is rhematic and the reference can be both definite (the girl) and indefinite (a girl) depending on the context (Karlík et al. 2002: 108). In case an indefinite NP is used in the theme of the sentence, it has to be introduced by a language element expressing indefiniteness, e.g. indefinite pronoun (76).

(76) *Nějaká* *dívka* chodila často do knihovny.  
a/some girl went often to the library  
A/some girl often went to the library.

The Czech speaker can optionally use demonstrative pronouns *ten* (this), *tento* (that) and the formal variant *onen* (that) in order to emphasize the identifiability of the NP (77). The most frequently used demonstrative in Czech is *ten*, which is unstressed in the case of an anaphoric reference and stressed in a cataphoric reference. More distant objects are pointed out by the pronoun *tamtén* (that).<sup>32</sup>

(77) Četl jsi ten článek?  
Read you the article  
Have you read the article?

As mentioned above, the indefinite pronouns can be used in order to mark indefiniteness. In Czech, two sorts of pronouns expressing indefiniteness are distinguished, namely specific

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<sup>32</sup> Other demonstratives that can be used are *takový* (such), which refers to a characteristic of an entity and often intensifies it, e.g. *Taková ostuda!* (Such a shame!) (Grepel et al. 1995: 292) and the pronoun *sám* (itself) which has got an emphasizing function.

and non-specific. Specific indefinite pronouns are somehow identifiable for the speaker, but not for the hearer, whereas non-specific are not identifiable for any of the parties. Indefinite pronouns *jakýsi*, *kterýsi* (some (or other)) and the numeral *jeden* (one) express specific indefiniteness (78) and *jakýchkoli(v)*, *kterýchkoli(v)* (any, whatever) mark non-specific indefiniteness (79) (Hlavsa 1972: 201-202).

- (78) Šel za mnou jakýsi pán.  
 Went after me some man  
 A man came after me.
- (79) Vyber si, jakoukoliv knihu si přeješ.  
 Choose any book you want  
 Choose any book you want.

The indefinite pronoun *nějaký* (some) can be used in both specific and non-specific contexts. Whereas (80) marks a specific indefinite NP, (81) refers to a non-specific indefinite NP.

- (80) Viděla jsem to v nějakém filmu.  
 Saw I it in some movie.  
 I saw it in a movie.
- (81) Doporučil bys mi nějaký film?  
 Recommend would you me some movie  
 Would you recommend me a movie?

Furthermore, cardinal numbers usually mark indefiniteness, unless not accompanied by an additional language element, such as a demonstrative. In that case, definiteness is marked. The numeral *oba* (both), which is inherently definite, forms an exception to this rule.

Although the declension of nouns is not the only structural cause of the absence of articles, typologically there is contingency between articles and the case paradigm. While the Slavic languages usually have a case system with an average of seven cases, Bulgarian and Macedonian are nominally limited with only the nominative and accusative case. Above that, these two languages are also the only Slavic standard languages using articles (Trenkić 2009: 5). Bulgarian and Macedonian make use of definite articles that are postponed as suffixes to the

first word of the noun phrase. In addition to these two languages, definite articles can also be observed in some northern Russian dialects (Weiss 2010: 450).

Despite the absence of a standard category of articles in Czech, there is a tendency towards grammaticalization of some language elements in the function of this phenomenon (Mathesius 1926; Dobiáš 2016; Konvička 2017; Zíková 2017). Dobiáš (2016) examined an excessive use of the demonstrative pronoun *ten* (this), the indefinite pronoun *nějaký* (some) and the numeral *jeden* (one) in colloquial language. He argues that these pronouns and the numeral are used in the function of articles and are pronounced unstressed in such contexts. However, it is emphasized that this phenomenon can only be observed in the spoken language production for the time being since these language elements would be considered redundant in the written language production. Furthermore, Zíková (2017) researched the use of referential devices in spoken narratives focusing on *ten*-marked NPs and unmarked NPs in order to explore the possible grammaticalization of the lexeme *ten* from its anaphoric use. She concluded that the persistence of the referent was consistently higher for the *ten*-marked NPs which could be a source for the potential grammaticalization of *ten* into a definite article.

### 2.3.2 Grammatical gender

In fusional languages, the category of grammatical gender categorises nouns primarily for the purposes of inflection. Slavic languages distinguish among three genders, namely masculine, feminine and neuter. Furthermore, masculine is divided into animate and inanimate gender. The animate gender refers to persons and animals, whereas the inanimate gender to things.

The semantic component of gender is related to the natural gender and applies only to a part of nouns, especially to the names of persons and animals. The natural gender (sex) determines the grammatical gender (genus). Only for the names that do not have any natural gender based on their meaning such as things, abstract names etc., the grammatical gender is not related to the semantic component of the word and is given by tradition (cf. Karlík et al. 2002; Pravdová & Svobodová 2014).

It is argued that gender in Czech is transparently distributed based on specific suffixes. Typical suffixes for masculine are a consonant or  $-\emptyset$  suffix (82), for feminine suffixes  $-a$  or  $-e$  (83) and for neuter suffixes  $-o$ ,  $-e$  and  $-í$  (84).

(82) vdovec<sub>m</sub>

- widower  
 (83) vdova<sub>f</sub>  
 widow  
 (84) vnouče<sub>n</sub>  
 grandchild

The natural gender is expressed in three ways: first, lexically through heteronomous pairs of words such as kinship relations (85); second, by the formation of the gender opposites of nouns where the formation of nouns labelling women from the nouns labelling men is common (Čermák 2011: 141) (86) and third, grammatically for the names of some professions typical only for a certain sex, for some evaluating expressions and some compounds (87) (see Karlík et al. 2002).

- |      |                                             |                                          |                       |
|------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (85) | muž <sub>m</sub> – žena <sub>f</sub>        | bratr <sub>m</sub> – sestra <sub>f</sub> |                       |
|      | man – woman                                 | brother – sister                         |                       |
| (86) | učitel <sub>m</sub> – učitelka <sub>f</sub> | žabák <sub>m</sub> – žába <sub>f</sub>   |                       |
|      | teacher – teacher                           | frog – frog                              |                       |
| (87) | letuška <sub>f</sub>                        | lenoch <sub>m</sub>                      | kazisvět <sub>m</sub> |
|      | stewardess                                  | loafer                                   | destroyer             |

### 2.3.2.1 Congruency and grammatical gender in Czech

In Czech, the existence of gender is manifested in the formal congruence of nouns with adjectives (88) and verbs in the past tense (89) and conditional mood (90) (Čermák 2011: 141-142). Adjectives and verbs employ different suffixes according to the gender distinctions also in plural (91).<sup>33</sup>

- |      |           |             |             |
|------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| (88) | velký muž | velká žena  | velké kuře  |
|      | big man   | big woman   | big chicken |
| (89) | muž běhal | žena běhala | kuře běhalo |
|      | man ran   | woman ran   | chicken ran |

<sup>33</sup> In general, suffix *-i* is used for masculine animate, suffix *-y* for masculine inanimate and feminine and *-a* for neuter. In case an utterance consists of multiple subjects, the suffix of a higher standing is applied:

(i) muži a ženy běhali  
 men and women ran

- |      |                   |                   |                     |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| (90) | muž by běhal      | žena by běhala    | kuře by běhalo      |
|      | man would run     | woman would run   | chicken would run   |
| (91) | velcí muži běhali | velké ženy běhaly | velká kuřata běhala |
|      | big men ran       | big women ran     | big chickens ran    |

### 3 Research questions and hypotheses

Having looked into the current L2/FL research, syntax and semantics of articles in Dutch and the corresponding language features in Czech, the main research questions were defined as follows:

- **RQ1:** Will there be a significant error reduction in the overall article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch at higher language proficiency levels compared to lower language proficiency levels?
- **RQ2:** Will there be a persistent variability in the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch demonstrated by resistant errors at higher language proficiency levels?
- **RQ3:** Will there be a negative semantic transfer from L1 Czech with respect to the use of functional categories in FL Dutch?
- **RQ4:** Will the number of article omission errors be significantly higher than other errors made?
- **RQ5:** Will the overuse of definite articles in [-definite][+specific] contexts and the overuse of indefinite article in [+definite][-specific] contexts by Czech learners be significantly higher than errors made in other contexts?
- **RQ6:** Will Czech learners overgeneralise the definite article in their article interlanguage production and use *de* as the default for less frequent nouns?

Founded on the earlier described theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **H1:** We presuppose a significant error reduction at the higher language proficiency levels since metalinguistic knowledge of FL learners might increase as they are exposed to more language acquisition input (Franceschina 2001; Sabourin et al. 2006). The longer the Czech learners are acquiring Dutch, the higher the language proficiency level they have reached in both general language knowledge and article use in FL Dutch.
- **H2:** A persistent variability is expected to occur in the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch based on the observation that adult FL learners are not able to fully acquire the article use due to fossilisation (Selinker 1972, 1992; Littlewood 2006; Pimingsdorfer 2010). Above that, we presume that the adult Czech learners of FL



Dutch do not have access to UG which implies they might not be able to fully achieve the native-like competence in article use (cf. Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996; Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b).

- **H3:** We presume negative transfer from L1 Czech (Trenkić 2007; Pimingsdorfer 2010) since Czech might encode definiteness by lexicon-based strategies (Ullman 2001; Trenkić 2002, 2004) rather than by a functional category (i.e. articles). This is supported by the Declarative/Procedural model assuming the use of declarative/lexical memory instead of procedural memory when acquiring various grammatical categories by adult learners (Ullman 2001, 2004). Referring to that, we expect the adult Czech learners to acquire the article use depending on their declarative/lexical memory rather than procedural memory, which might inhibit the acquisition of the grammatical function of articles in Dutch. The more semantically transparent the grammatical phenomenon is, the easier it turns out to be to master it (Trenkić 2009; Pimingsdorfer 2010).
- **H4:** A large omission rate is assumed to apply in the interlanguage production since Czech lacks the category of articles as an overt carrier of grammatical definiteness (cf. Corver 1990; Hawkins 2004; Trenkić 2004). Following Trenkić (2000, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2009), it is hypothesized that errors in the article interlanguage production by adult learners with an article-less L1 might be caused by the elementary morphosyntactic function of articles. Given that Czech does not have the category of articles and definiteness is mostly clear from the discourse, there is a lack of overt syntactic determiners to analyse this category correctly in L2/FL. However, as there are arguments for the presence of a functional DP in Czech (Veselovská 1995, 2001, 2004), we argue that the errors are not misanalysed syntactically as procedural adjectives as claimed by Trenkić (2007, 2008, 2009), but rather pragmatically. Trenkić (2002: 127) also refers to a pragmatic rule in article use, namely “do not use articles if what they stand for can be easily recovered from the context”. Since the article interlanguage production is presumably discourse-driven rather than grammatically-driven based on the language features available in the L1, the FL learners might misinterpret the grammatical function of articles by focusing on their semantics and the context of their use.
- **H5:** With regard to the semantic universals (Ionin et al. 2004, 2008, 2009; Snape 2006) and access to UG (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996; Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b), we do not expect any UG-constrained parameters to affect the article

production. Therefore, an overuse of definite articles in [-definite][+specific] contexts and an overuse of indefinite article in [+definite][-specific] contexts as argued in the studies focused on the availability of definiteness and specificity (as semantic universals) to FL learners from article-less L1s (Ionin et al. 2004, 2008, 2009; Snape 2006) is not presumed. The substitution of articles might be caused by the explicitly stated knowledge and (non-)familiarity with the referent in the utterance of the speaker rather than by specificity expressed by the speaker as “intent to refer” (cf. Ionin et al. 2004; Trenkić 2008).

- **H6:** Following Sabourin et al. 2006, we assume that adult Czech learners might be affected positively by the gender presence in Czech. However, they might not be able to fully acquire the target-like gender feature in Dutch as the Czech gender system does not have similar morphological exponents as the Dutch one. In view of the intralingual process of overgeneralisation (cf. Selinker 1972, 1992; Littlewood 2006), we assume that Czech learners might overgeneralise *de* in the contexts where *het* is required while using declarative/lexical memory to acquire the category of grammatical gender (Ullman 2001, 2004). They might use *de* as the default in less familiar nouns due to the fact that the common article *de* occurs in 75% of all Dutch words (Haeseryn et al. 1997; Cornips & Hulk 2008). Above that, the English definite article might play a significant role. Since English is currently the most learnt foreign language in the Czech Republic and only has one definite article *the*, we might assume that a certain pattern is acquired while using articles in foreign languages by Czech learners.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1 Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis

In order to describe and to explain the above-mentioned predicted patterns in the article use of adult Czech learners in FL Dutch, we finally propose the *Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis*. This hypothesis argues that most omission and substitution errors are caused by a misanalysis of the morphosyntactic function of articles by relying on the pragmatic features of the context since the form-meaning pattern of articles is not transparent for the FL learners.

Based on the Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis, two basic errors in article use are expected to be made in the article interlanguage production in FL Dutch by Czech adult learners:

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<sup>34</sup> In 2017, 97.9% of Czech learners learnt English as the main foreign language. For more information see: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/stoletistatistiky/anglictina-univerzalni-jazyk-evropske-unie>.

- Omission
- Substitution

### 3.1.1 Omission

Omission errors are assumed to be primarily made at a lower language proficiency level and predominantly in the [-definite] condition (cf. Pimingsdorfer 2010; Trenkić 2002; Kluková 2016, 2018). This might be caused by the negative transfer from the L1 that obligatorily does not use any syntactic language features to introduce a new NP such as in (92).

|      |                           |       |           |                 |          |
|------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| (92) | Hij                       | heeft | gisteren  | <i>een boek</i> | gelezen. |
|      | He                        | has   | yesterday | a book          | read     |
|      |                           | Četl  | včera     | <i>knihu.</i>   |          |
|      |                           | Read  | yesterday | book            |          |
|      | He read a book yesterday. |       |           |                 |          |

Learners tend to label the FL articles as redundant in view of the fact that in their L1 language, a new NP is mostly not introduced by any overt syntactic markers. Therefore, they might omit the articles for pragmatic reasons. The hypothesis would then be that the transfer from L1 directly affects the article interlanguage production. Above that, we assume that the higher the learner's language proficiency gets, the less omission errors occur. This type of errors is expected to gradually disappear with increased exposure to the FL input.

Furthermore, it is presumed that articles might be omitted also in the [+definite] condition. However, in much fewer cases and in second or further mention of definite nouns. The same pragmatic rule might be applied as in the omission in the [-definite] condition, namely that definite articles are seen as redundant in second and further mentions, since these are easily recognisable from the context. We expect this omission to primarily occur at a lower language proficiency level.

### 3.1.2 Substitution

Substitution errors might be caused by two phenomena:

- Pragmatic misanalysis by focusing on explicitly stated knowledge
- Overgeneralisation

The pragmatic misanalysis might be carried out in [+definite][-specific] and [-definite][+specific] conditions based on the interpretation of the context. In (93), the FL learner might be influenced by the explicitly stated knowledge in the following sentence implying that the speaker does not know the owner of the company. In (94), on the other hand, the FL learner might use an incorrect article under the influence of the fact that the speaker explicitly mentions his/her familiarity with the new colleague.

- (93) Mijn broer wil *de eigenaar* van het bedrijf spreken. Het maakt niet uit wie dat is.  
Můj bratr chce mluvit s *majitelem* firmy. Je jedno, kdo to je.  
My brother wants to talk to the owner of company. It doesn't matter who that is.
- (94) We hebben een nieuwe collega. Zij heet Petra en is heel vriendelijk.  
Máme novou kolegyni. Jmenuje se Petra a je velmi přátelská.  
We've got a new colleague. Her name is Petra and she is very friendly.

Furthermore, we expect substitution errors to be made in the category of grammatical gender. As the majority of Dutch nouns and all plurals are common, FL learners might tend to use *de* more than *het* based on the pragmatic assumption that they have got a higher chance to use it correctly.

Generally, we expect that the substitution errors might be reduced at a higher language proficiency level based on increased exposure to the FL input. However, some errors might remain resistant, fossilize and occur also at a high language proficiency level since FL learners might fail to fully acquire the target-like semantics of article use and gender of Dutch nouns.

## **4 Empirical research methodology**

In the previous chapters, it was shown that Czech does not have a system of articles and that it uses other language features to express definiteness. Based on that, we argued that Czech learners of Dutch face difficulties when mastering the correct use of articles in Dutch. The Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis was eventually proposed which we believe could explain such difficulties in order to formulate suggestions for the teaching of article use in Dutch.

However, no empirical evidence has been provided for the proposed Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis so far. Therefore, a cross-sectional experimental study has been carried out in order to investigate the FL acquisition of Dutch articles by adult Czech learners by analysing their interlanguage production data (cf. Corder 1967; Ellis 2009; Trenkić 2000).

In this chapter, the methodology of this study is described. We present the tasks used in the empirical research, the participants and the control group of native speakers that participated in this study, the decisions that were made regarding the interpretation of results and the applied statistical methods.

### **4.1 Data elicitation methods**

It has been decided to examine the hypotheses based on controlled data elicitation methods rather than using naturally occurring data in order to reduce too many variables in the results and to make the results more generalizable (cf. Trenkić 2000).

Therefore, interlanguage production data were elicited by means of three different tests:

- Free text writing test
- Translation test
- Forced-choice elicitation test

We used three different tasks in order to ensure our data would not be limited by one elicitation method used (cf. Ellis 2009; Trenkić 2000). It has been shown in the literature that performance variabilities resulting from using various tasks originate from different time restrictions, different learner's focus on form and also the possibility to avoid certain forms (Krashen 1982; Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). We assume that using a combination of three different tasks will provide the required variation in the used tools in order to give us more insight in both the implicit and explicit knowledge of the article system in Dutch by Czech learners. While the free text writing test is aimed to test the learner's spontaneous written production, and hereby their implicit knowledge, without any focus on form, the forced-choice

elicitation test is fully focused on form and should test the learner's controlled article production based on their explicit knowledge (see Figure 4.1).<sup>35</sup> Although we realize both implicit and explicit knowledge can be used simultaneously while completing the tasks, the difference in focusing on form might primarily trigger different sorts of knowledge. The translation test is a combination of both, since the source text is determined, but there is no attention drawn to the production of articles. That means that learners might apply certain avoidance methods while translating the text from Czech into Dutch.

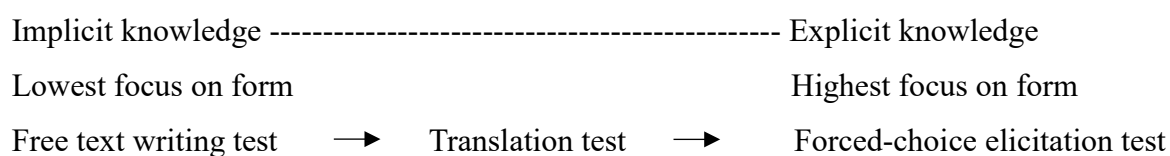


Figure 4.1: Testing scale

The main goal of these tasks is to see how articles are put to use and to describe the cross-learner's systematicity and variability across the tasks. Above that, the aim is to investigate in what aspects the interlanguage production differs from the required native-like form, what might cause such discrepancies, and finally to formulate what implications this might have on the teaching of such problematic aspects.

#### 4.1.1 Free text writing test

The first task elicits spontaneous written data. The participants were asked to write a short message to their friend about an interesting book they had read. The message should be 8-10 sentences long. The participants had approximately 15 minutes to complete this task.

It is important to stress that the participants were not aware of the focus of the research on article use in Dutch. That means that they were not fully focusing on article use and might have used different language features in this task in order to avoid articles in Dutch.

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<sup>35</sup> We are aware of the fact that free text writing is not the most spontaneous language utterance. In order to fully test the learner's implicit knowledge, spontaneous oral interlanguage production would have to be examined. However, we have not elicited any spoken data due to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic generally made the data elicitation difficult as all tasks needed to be spread and taken electronically. This has had a notable impact on the number of participants in this study (see Chapter 4.2).

### 4.1.2 Translation test

A translation test was introduced to elicit controlled written data in this study. Although we are aware of the long and ongoing discussion about the suitability of translation as a test methodology for assessing L2/FL proficiency (Lado 1961; Weller 1989; Tsagari & Floros 2013), we chose this method since we were not testing general FL proficiency and it proved to be a useful task for controlled elicitation of directly comparable NPs (Trenkić 2000: 126).

For the purpose of this study, a short text of 10 sentences was first written in Dutch and then translated into Czech. The text in Czech was then given to the participants to translate it into Dutch. The test was composed of basic vocabulary, but we expected that some words and expressions might cause difficulties to some of the participants, primarily at lower language proficiency levels. Since we were not testing general and/or lexical FL proficiency, a vocabulary was prepared consisting of 14 words and expressions (without stating any articles of the introduced nominals) in order to make this task manageable for all proficiency groups. In general, the participants were asked not to use any dictionaries or online tools, but were advised to use the prepared vocabulary provided below the source text (see Appendix 1). The participants had approximately 15 minutes to complete this task.

As applied in the first task, the participants were not aware of the focus of the research on article use in Dutch. Also in this task, they might have used different language features in order to avoid articles in Dutch, although their avoidance possibilities were limited by the source text in this task. In comparison to the free text writing test, there is more attention to the form of language, but still with no attention drawn to the production of articles. Therefore, we assume that the learner's focus on form would be evenly distributed without any primary focus on articles.

### 4.1.3 Forced-choice elicitation test

The forced-choice elicitation test is generally based on the methodology by Ionin et al. (2004, 2008, 2009). The task provides the context in which the learner's attention is fully focused on form and article use in particular, as opposed to the free text writing and the translation tests. In this task, explicit knowledge of article use in Dutch is examined. The forced-choice elicitation test consists of 20 short dialogues in Dutch. The target structures in each dialogue were left out and the participants had to choose between *de*, *het*, *een*, and the null article (-) based on the provided context. The participants had approximately 15 minutes to complete this task.

This format was opted for in order to be able to control the given context fully. In comparison to the free text writing and translation tests, this test does not allow any avoidance strategies which enables examination of article use production in specific contexts. Furthermore, this test is very easily quantifiable.

It can be argued that the learner's performance on the forced-choice elicitation test says more about the learner's metalinguistic knowledge of how articles are used rather than about how the learner actually uses articles. However, the forced-choice elicitation test was chosen to explore the learner's explicit knowledge and to complement the findings from the free text writing and translation tests. Whereas the results from the first and second task should provide us with information on how learners at different language proficiency levels use articles in their interlanguage production, the directly comparable results from the forced-choice elicitation test should give us a better picture of what their metalinguistic knowledge of article use in Dutch is (cf. Trenkić 2000: 128).

## 4.2 Procedure

All tests were prepared in the online platform ProQuestion (see Appendix 1 and 2). Before having shared the tests with Czech participants and the control group of native Dutch speakers, a pre-testing was carried out. Two Czech native speakers that studied Dutch and two native Dutch speakers were asked to review each test while focusing on the content, its electronic format and the instructions so that we surely knew that the test environment was working well and all instructions were clear. The pre-testing was successful. There was only a discussion about the term *learner* in Czech and Dutch. As a result, the term *student* (student, learner) in Czech and *leerder* (learner) in Dutch were used.

After the pre-testing, the test for Czech participants was sent to the three Czech universities where it is possible to study Dutch, namely Palacký University in Olomouc, Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno. The contacted teachers were asked to distribute the test to their students, possibly in the scope of their grammar related subjects. Due to a small number of current students of Dutch in the Czech Republic, the universities were asked to distribute the tests also to their alumni in order to collect representative data based on a statistically valid number of participants.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Since the number of participants was still relatively small after the first testing round and we received some feedback that the students might be slightly demotivated due to the digital lessons in the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to offer all participants a compensation for the time they spent on filling in the tests. The compensation was 200 CZK for a fully completed test. It needs to be pointed out that in total, only 8 participants asked for the



The participants were asked to participate in this research electronically. As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 4.1.1 and 4.1.2), the participants did not know that article use was tested in particular. They were informed that the research looked into FL acquisition in general in order to make sure that the participants would not be focusing on articles during the first two tasks. Only in the forced-choice elicitation test, it was clear that the tested grammatical phenomenon was article use.

The participants were asked not to use any dictionaries or any online tools while completing all three tasks. All instructions were written in Czech so that it would not have any influence on the learner's interlanguage production, especially in the free text writing test (cf. Ungermannová 2015).

### 4.3 Participants

The research was carried out at three universities in the Czech Republic, namely Palacký University in Olomouc, Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno. In total, 35 subjects participated in this study.<sup>37</sup> The group of university students was comprised of the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year students and alumni.

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire where the following participant's information was collected:

- Age
- Native language
- One of their parents or grandparents are native Dutch speakers
- Number of years of Dutch language acquisition (in total)
- Number of hours of Dutch language acquisition per year (language acquisition lessons, grammar)
- Dutch language certificate achieved
- Teaching/learning materials used in Dutch lessons (language acquisition lessons, grammar)
- Study and/or work in a Dutch speaking country, current contact with Dutch

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compensation after all.

<sup>37</sup> We realize that the total number of respondents is relatively small. However, it needs to be seen in the context of the currently low numbers of university students of Dutch in the Czech Republic. Above that, including adult learners of Dutch acquisition courses in the research was not a workable option, since many courses were cancelled or took place irregularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Knowledge of other foreign languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Russian and other)

The study only examined adult learners with Czech as a native language without any parents and/or grandparents that are native Dutch speakers. Following these criteria, all Slovak native speakers that participated in the study were excluded from the research data. All final participants were older than 18 years old and their native language was Czech. An overview of the provided basic data of the final participants can be found in Table 4.1.

| <b>No. of participants</b> | <b>Average age (years)</b> | <b>Native language</b> | <b>One of their (grand)parents Dutch</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 35                         | 24.83 <sup>38</sup>        | Czech                  | No                                       |

Table 4.1: Participant's basic information

In order to determine approximate language proficiency of the participants, the subjects were asked how many years of Dutch language lessons they completed. It is important to mention that the tests were taken at the end of the academic year 2020/2021. The university students thus completed the whole study year when taking the tests. The duration of Dutch language acquisition of the participants was highly heterogeneous and it lay between one to seven years. For that reason, the participants were split into three groups on the basis of the number of years of explicit instructions in Dutch:

- Group 1: Beginners – 1-2 years
- Group 2: Intermediate – 3-4 years
- Group 3: Advanced – 5-7 years

For more information regarding the duration of Dutch language acquisition and the number of participants, we refer to Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2.

| Group        | Expected Dutch proficiency | Study year                          | No. of years of Dutch acquisition | Average no. of years of Dutch acquisition | No. of participants |
|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Group 1      | Beginners                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 1-2                               | 1.75                                      | 12                  |
| Group 2      | Intermediate               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> | 3-4                               | 3.41                                      | 11                  |
| Group 3      | Advanced                   | 5 <sup>th</sup> and alumni          | 5-7                               | 5.79                                      | 12                  |
| <b>Total</b> |                            |                                     |                                   | <b>3.66</b>                               | <b>35</b>           |

Table 4.2: Dutch language acquisition duration

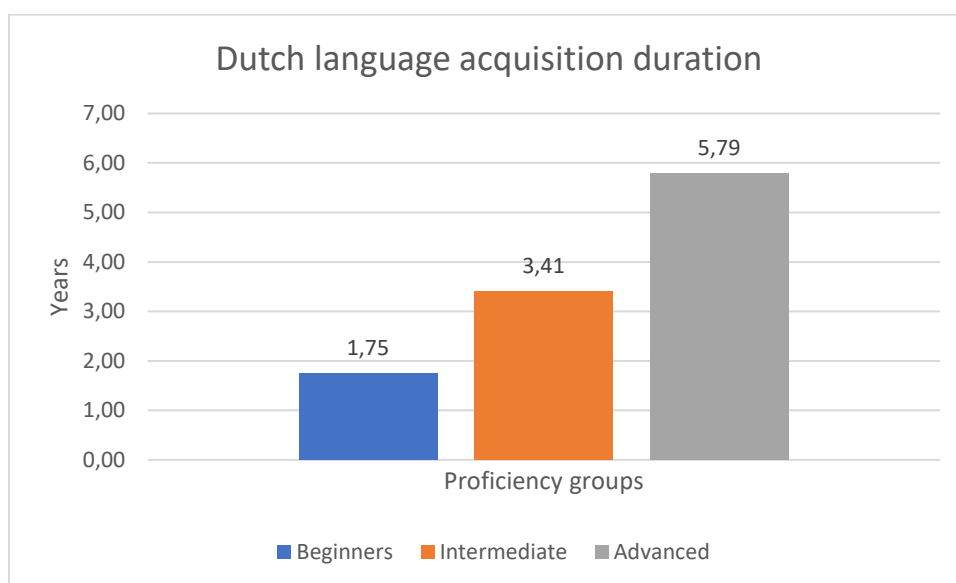


Figure 4.2: Number of years of Dutch language acquisition

We are aware that the division into groups on the basis of completed years of Dutch language acquisition does not necessarily need to correspond with the actual level of the participant's Dutch language proficiency. However, since we needed to draw a line among the three groups within this study, we considered the number of years of Dutch language acquisition the best currently available, comparable parameter for it as being the number of hours of explicit instructions in Dutch.<sup>38</sup>

In the participant's questionnaire, also the number of hours of Dutch language acquisition lessons and grammar lessons per year was asked. Unfortunately, not all participants filled in a well-grounded number of hours. We assume that some participants might have taken into

<sup>38</sup> We also considered the *Dutch as a Foreign Language Certificate (Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal CNaVT)* as a possible parameter. Nonetheless, we assume it would not be a reliable parameter since the exams have not yet taken place in 2021. Above that, there might have been some irregularities last years as well due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

account only grammar lessons and some of them might have stated all lessons in Dutch. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants that filled in this information stated around 100-150 hours of Dutch language acquisition lessons. That number does correspond with our expectations since an academic year in the Czech Republic mostly consists of 26 weeks and there are approximately three lessons of Dutch language acquisition per week.<sup>39</sup> Every lesson lasts 90 minutes.

Furthermore, the participants were asked whether they had obtained any certificate in the Dutch language. It is currently possible to obtain an international Dutch language certificate only in the form of the *Dutch as a Foreign Language Certificate (Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal – CNaVT)* that provides certificates at the following levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR):<sup>40</sup>

- *Maatschappelijk Informeel (INFO)* – Social Informal (A2)
- *Maatschappelijk Formeel (FORM)* – Social Formal (B1)
- *Zakelijk Professioneel (PROF)* – Business Professional (B2)
- *Educatief Startbekwaam (STRT)* – Educative Starting (B2)
- *Educatief Professioneel (EDUP)* – Educative Professional (C1)

In Figure 4.3, it is shown that 31.43% of the participants had not yet obtained any CNaVT certificate. The rest of the participants had already certified their knowledge of Dutch, whereas the majority of them obtained the certificate *Zakelijk Professioneel* (Business Professional) at level B2 according to the CEFR. Only 2.86% of the participants achieved the highest certified level of C1.

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<sup>39</sup> There might be some discrepancies in the number of hours of Dutch language acquisition among the three groups, since the 1<sup>st</sup> year students have probably got more Dutch language acquisition lessons than the 5<sup>th</sup> year students. However, the senior students have got lessons of syntax and morphology instead.

<sup>40</sup> It is currently not possible to obtain a Dutch language certificate at level C2 according to the CEFR.

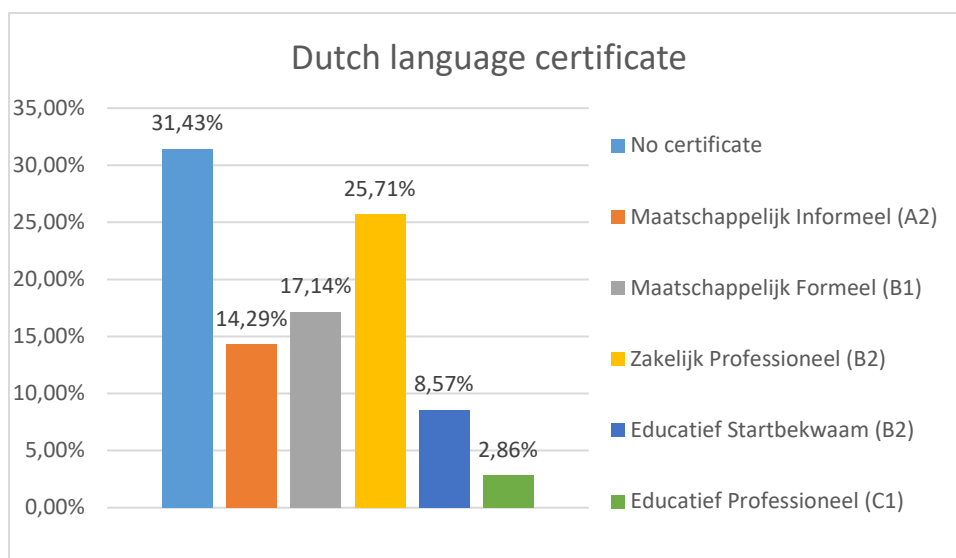


Figure 4.3: Distribution of Dutch language certificate

We were also interested in the teaching/learning materials the learners were confronted with during their language acquisition lessons. Various textbooks were mentioned such as *Spreken is Zilver!* and *FF NL leren, Nederlands in actie* and *Nederlands naar perfectie, Contact!, Taal Totaal* and *Capita Selecta z nizozemské lingvistiky*. The participants mentioned also other teaching/learning materials such as worksheets and scripts prepared by their teachers. Due to the large number of various materials, it is not possible to analyse whether any interlanguage specifics are related to any of the teaching/learning materials.

Furthermore, the respondents had an additional field available to fill in their study and work experience in a Dutch speaking country and their current contact with Dutch in view of the participation of alumni. Only a few participants provided extra information regarding this topic. Some participants mentioned a study exchange programme or an internship in the Netherlands or Belgium which did not last longer than 4 months. One alumnus stated that he/she did not have any contact with Dutch after having finished his/her university studies of Dutch. Since the participant is 28 years old now and studied Dutch for 7 years, we do not expect any significant impact on his/her article use in Dutch. Above that, no high deviations were observed in the responses of this respondent compared to the rest of the group.

Finally, the participants were asked to state their knowledge of other foreign languages as well. Since Dutch is taught as a foreign language, other languages might play an important role in the acquisition, especially when the other languages use articles. From the elicited data, it is clear that all participants speak English very well. 74.29% of the participants filled in that their knowledge of English is advanced and 25.71% of the participants consider their knowledge

intermediate. The second most spoken language was German with 43.75% beginners, 21.88% intermediate and 15.63% advanced speakers. Both English and German make use of articles, which should encourage the acquisition of Dutch articles. Furthermore, also other common foreign languages were checked such as French, Spanish and Russian. Figure 4.4 gives a detailed overview of the knowledge of the mentioned foreign languages as filled in by the participants.

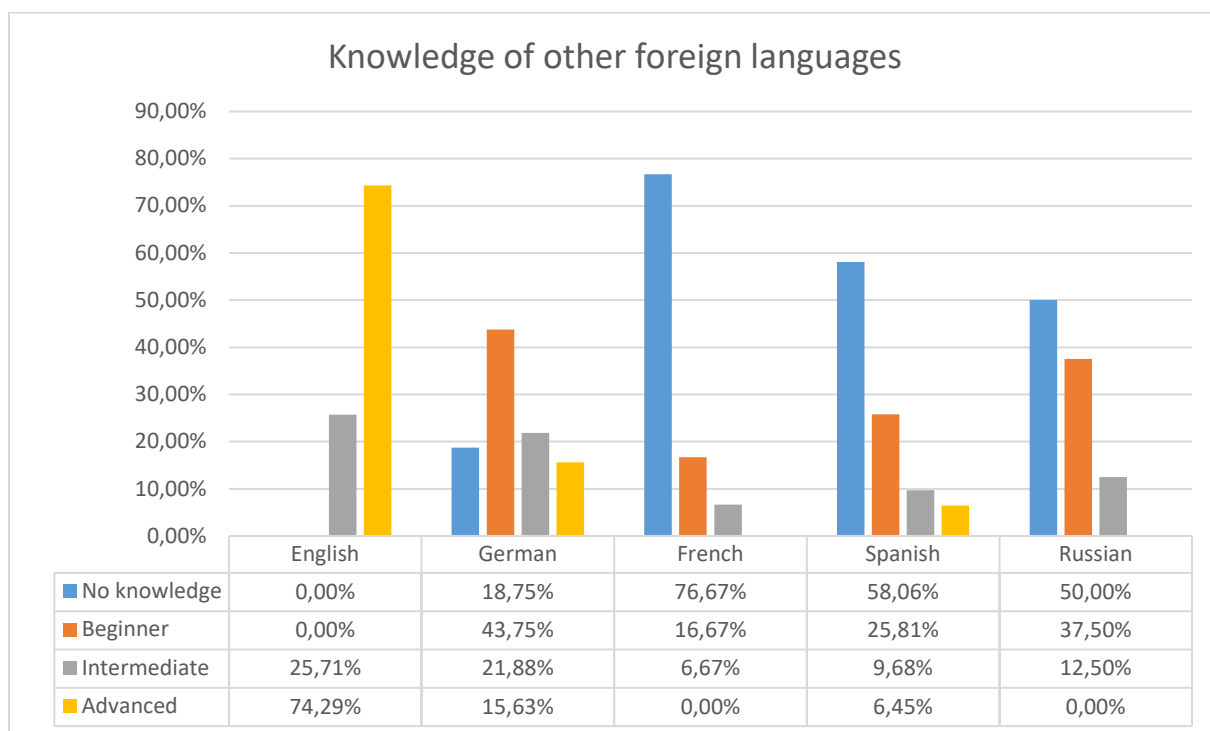


Figure 4.4: Knowledge of other foreign languages

Besides that, some participants stated that they spoke the following languages at beginner or intermediate language proficiency level: Polish, Norwegian, Finish, Slovak, Italian, Latin, Japanese and Arabic.

#### 4.4 Control group

In order to be able to control the examined data, a group of native speakers of Dutch was introduced to this research. Firstly, it was important to check that the presented theoretical assumptions on native speaker use of articles do not deviate from the standard. Secondly, it was necessary to create a native production against which the interlanguage production of the non-native speakers could be compared in order to be able to distinguish between an error due to being a non-native speaker and thus performing the task in a foreign language and a possible

variant of native speaker's performance (cf. Trenkić 2000: 131-132).

The control group consisted of Dutch native speakers from the author's working network. The control group participants were asked to do a cloze test and a forced-choice elicitation test. The cloze test<sup>41</sup> was based on the text, which the Czech participants had to translate into Dutch. In the original text in Dutch, all articles were left out so that the control group would fill the missing words in. Since there was no explicit instruction to fill in articles, the native speakers could fill in pronouns and other word sorts as well. The forced-choice elicitation test was identical to the test for the Czech participants.

All control group participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire in order to check whether the control group consisted of adult native speakers of Dutch. In total, 25 native speakers participated in this research. All control participants were older than 18 years old and their native language was Dutch. An overview of the provided information can be found in Table 4.3.<sup>42</sup>

| No. of control participants | Average age (years) | Native language |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 25                          | 51.16 <sup>43</sup> | Dutch           |

Table 4.3: Control participant's information

#### 4.5 Learner's errors

In order to be able to examine article use errors that are made in Dutch by Czech learners, it was necessary to define what is to be considered an error in article use in the learner's interlanguage production in this research.

An L2/FL error can be defined as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, [it] reflects the competence of the learner" (Brown 2007: 258).<sup>43</sup> That means that a linguistic error refers to a difference from the L2/FL norm. To decide what the L2/FL norm is

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<sup>41</sup> A cloze test refers to a test with certain words removed, where the participant is asked to supply the missing language item. This test can be used to examine the ability to comprehend text, but also for assessment of L1 and L2/FL acquisition focusing on a specific language phenomenon (cf. Taylor 1953; Trenkić 2000).

<sup>42</sup> We are aware of the fact that the control group is generally older than the target participants. However, we do not presume any significant impact of it on the purpose of this study.

<sup>43</sup> Brown (2007: 227-259) makes a distinction between mistakes and errors. A mistake refers to a random performance error in the correct utilisation of a known system. These random ungrammaticalities can be self-corrected, when attention is drawn to them. Whereas an error is a direct manifestation of the interlanguage system of a learner reflecting the result of the learner's systematic competence. It is not always possible to tell the difference between an error and a mistake. In the frame of this study, we assume that the learners had enough time for self-correction and we therefore consider all deviations from the norm in the interlanguage production of the learners as errors.

we analysed the data produced by the control group of native speakers. We had to define how consistent the language production of native speakers has to be in order to be considered a norm. In case one (and more) native speaker produced a certain form in a certain context once, is it to be considered a permissible form in the learner's interlanguage production or is it a native speaker's mistake?

Although the answer to this question depends on many variables and it is not possible to define it in absolute terms, we had to draw a line for the purpose of this study to compare our results against it. Therefore, for the translation test and the forced-choice elicitation test, we quantified the correct FL production as follows: if all 25 speakers produced the same article form in the same context, then only that form was accepted as correct in the learner's interlanguage production. If one or two native speakers chose a different form, which is less than 10% of the total number of native speakers in the control group, we considered it an individual deviation, which is not part of the norm and was not accepted as correct in the learner's interlanguage production. Finally, if more than two native speakers opted for a different form, which is more than 10% of the total number of native speakers in the control group, then both the form chosen by the majority of native speakers and the form chosen by at least three native speakers were accepted as the native speaker norm and were considered correct in the learner's interlanguage production (cf. Trenkić 2000). As far as errors in the free text writing test are concerned, an error analysis was carried out of the text corpus (cf. Pimingsdorfer 2010; Ungermannová 2015).

To analyse article use in Dutch by Czech learners, all elicited nominals were classified on the basis of five conditions, namely number, gender, countability, definiteness and specificity. For each item, it was determined what the correct article is based on the above-mentioned conditions. Following that, we distinguished among the following two basic learner's errors with some further specification within the groups (see Chapter 4.5.2):

- Omission errors
- Substitution errors

#### **4.5.1 Omission errors**

Omission is a standard type of error caused by a learner omitting articles in a context in which an article is required. There is a discrepancy between omission and the null article as we cannot be sure whether the learner aimed to use the null article. However, we consider no article



in an obligatory case as an omission for the purpose of this study.

## 4.5.2 Substitution errors

Besides the fact that articles can be omitted, they can also be substituted. Substitution of articles can be caused by errors in definiteness, gender, number, and countability.

### 4.5.2.1 Errors in definiteness

Articles can primarily be substituted due to errors in definiteness. Since articles in Dutch are distributed based on definiteness, the speaker needs to distinguish what is uniquely identifiable to the hearer in the set denoted to the NP. Some errors in definiteness can be easily identified such as direct reference to an earlier mentioned NP. However, some errors are more difficult to identify since it might be a question of the speaker's perspective and the context. For example, when a referent is introduced for the first time, but could potentially have a connection to some already introduced referent or to the whole situation of utterance. That could lead to a pragmatically delimited set in which the speaker might use a definite article when introducing the new referent. Due to the speaker's perception of the context, we cannot be sure whether the produced form accurately reflects the speaker's assumptions. Therefore, the performance of the native speakers in the cloze test and the forced-choice elicitation test was taken as the assessment basis (cf. Trenkić 2000). In Table 4.4, possible combinations in general article use focusing on definiteness are summarized.

|            | <b>Correct use</b>                                                             | <b>Incorrect use</b>                                                           |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>de</b>  | uniquely identifiable<br>[+definite, +specific];<br>[+definite, -specific]     | non-uniquely identifiable<br>[-definite, +specific];<br>[-definite, -specific] |
| <b>het</b> | uniquely identifiable<br>[+definite, +specific];<br>[+definite, -specific]     | non-uniquely identifiable<br>[-definite, +specific];<br>[-definite, -specific] |
| <b>een</b> | non-uniquely identifiable<br>[-definite, +specific];<br>[-definite, -specific] | uniquely identifiable<br>[+definite, +specific];<br>[+definite, -specific]     |
| <b>Ø</b>   | non-uniquely identifiable<br>[-definite, +specific];<br>[-definite, -specific] | uniquely identifiable<br>[+definite, +specific];<br>[+definite, -specific]     |

Table 4.4: Article use errors based on definiteness<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Special use of articles is not taken into account in this overview.

### 4.5.2.2 Errors in gender

Substitution of articles might also occur in [gender] feature. As explained earlier (see Chapter 2.2.2), grammatical rules in the gender distribution in Dutch are less transparent than in Czech. Errors can be made by using *de* with [+neuter] nominals and *het* with [-neuter] nominals. In view of the fact that article *de* is used more often than *het*, we expect overgeneralisation and thus errors in [-neuter] context. Possible correct and incorrect use of articles based on gender is shown in Table 4.5.

|            | Correct use          | Incorrect use |
|------------|----------------------|---------------|
| <b>de</b>  | [-neuter]            | [+neuter]     |
| <b>het</b> | [+neuter]            | [-neuter]     |
| <b>een</b> | [+neuter]; [-neuter] | -             |
| <b>Ø</b>   | [+neuter]; [-neuter] | -             |

Table 4.5: Article use errors based on gender

### 4.5.2.3 Errors in number and countability

In order to use articles correctly, learners need to know that NPs in Dutch may be preceded by articles *de*, *het*, *een* or null article. They should have the basic knowledge of distribution of these articles based on number and countability. Article *de* can be used with nominals in all types of [number] and [count] contexts, whereas *het* cannot be used in [+plural, +count] context. Furthermore, *een* can be combined with nominals appearing in [+singular, +count] context, but not in [+plural, +count] and [-count] context. Finally, null article is combined with bare nominals in [+plural, +count] and [-count] contexts. In Table 4.6, all possible correct and incorrect combinations of article forms with nominals in various [number] and [count] contexts are shown.

|            | Correct use                                      | Incorrect use               |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>de</b>  | [+singular, +count]; [+plural, +count]; [-count] | -                           |
| <b>het</b> | [+singular, +count]; [-count]                    | [+plural, +count]           |
| <b>een</b> | [+singular, +count]                              | [+plural, +count]; [-count] |
| <b>Ø</b>   | [+plural, +count]; [-count]                      | [+singular, +count]         |

Table 4.6: Article use errors based on number and countability

We assume that such errors rarely occur in the interlanguage of the participants in our study. In case any mistakes were made in the article distribution based on number and/or countability, it might be a random performance failure or a specific language transfer from L1.

#### 4.6 Statistical methods

Once all variables and errors were identified, the learner's article production was compared across groups, tasks and contexts. In order to define whether the results are statistically significant or only accidental, we used two statistical methods (Hendl 2006; Cantos Gómez 2013).

First, we calculated a Confidence Interval (CI) to be able to determine in which interval a result occurs in case we have got one parameter (e.g. [-neuter] and [+neuter] nominals). The standard deviation is calculated as follows:

$$\mu = 2 \sqrt{\frac{p(100 - p)}{n}}$$

where:

$\mu$  = deviation,

p = observed value in %

Thereafter, we determine the limit values by subtracting the deviation from and by adding the deviation to the observed value so that the actual result is in this interval:

$$(p - \mu) < X > (p + \mu)$$

The interval with a chosen confidence level determines the probability with which the estimated confidence interval will contain the true parameter value. For the purpose of this research, the confidence level 95% has been chosen. That means that we can expect that 95% of the calculated intervals will contain the observed value by repeating the procedure with new data each time from the same population.

Second, we used a single factor analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) to analyse significant differences between the means of the proficiency groups since the total number of participants was relatively small ( $n = 35$ ). Within this statistical method, we carried out an F-test using an F-distribution under the null hypothesis to compare two variances.

## 5 Results

In this chapter, results obtained from the three tasks are presented. In the results of each task, the following variables of nouns were analysed: number, gender, countability and concreteness of the nouns; the syntactic position in which the noun occurred; whether it was first or subsequent mention of the noun and other aspects of definiteness and specificity, the pre-modification of nouns by some element such as an adjective; and whether it was a unique entity or appeared in an idiom. Furthermore, all omission and substitution errors were examined.

### 5.1 Free text writing test

A free text writing test gives us the opportunity to examine spontaneously written learner's interlanguage. In the prompt, no attention was drawn to article use. Therefore, the participants did not primarily focus on the form and they might have applied various strategies to avoid article use by using demonstrative or possessive pronouns. Firstly, the collected corpus is described. Secondly, an error analysis is carried out and the observed errors are analysed.

#### 5.1.1 Corpus description

In order to be able to carry out an error analysis, the corpus had to be analysed first. In the corpus, all noun phrases (NPs) were searched, including substantivized verbs and adjectives. All NPs that occurred in coordination were considered separate NPs. For example, we counted two NPs to be examined in (95).<sup>45</sup>

(95) \*Ik vind dit boek heel spannend, omdat het alles heeft, bijvoorbeeld [een] *grote woordenschat*, [een] *historische en cultureel context*.

I find this book very exciting because it has everything, for example a large vocabulary, a historical and cultural context.

This approach was applied in order to analyse all individual cases as accurately as possible since [gender] feature might require a different article form than used with one of the nouns within the coordination.

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<sup>45</sup> In this example, the use of the indefinite article *een* is voluntary in the second NP, since the first indefinite article has already introduced the coordinated nominals in the sentence.

It is also necessary to mention which cases were left out of consideration. We excluded book titles since they were often written in Czech and/or Dutch. Above that, book titles are not representative items since articles are often left out from them to make the title of a book shorter and catchier. Furthermore, we decided to exclude proper names of people as well. We are aware that there are specific cases in Dutch in which articles are required with proper nouns (see Chapter 2.2.1.2.3). However, such cases rarely occur and did not occur at all in our corpus. In the corpus, many proper names of people were used since the participants wrote a message to their friend using proper names at the beginning and the end of the message. Furthermore, authors of books were often mentioned as well. Therefore, all proper names of people were excluded from the analysed data so that the total number of NPs without article or other determiner could be counted representatively.

In total, 581 NPs occurred in the corpus after excluding the above-mentioned cases. From that, 474 NPs (81.58%) were preceded by an article or the null article.<sup>46</sup> We can see that the use of articles is comparable across the groups. Only Group 2 used a higher amount of articles (85.63%) than the other two groups. The detailed results together with the calculated Confidence intervals are shown in Table 5.1.

|                | <b>Total no. of NPs</b> | <b>No. of NPs with articles or Ø</b> | <b>No. of NPs with articles or Ø (%)</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> | <b>Confidence level (95%)</b> | <b>Confidence interval</b> |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b> | 188                     | 152                                  | 80.85%                                   | 0.8058      | 0.1065                    | 0.0677                        | 0.74 < <i>p</i> > 0.87     |
| <b>Group 2</b> | 167                     | 143                                  | 85.63%                                   | 0.8579      | 0.0989                    | 0.0665                        | 0.79 < <i>p</i> > 0.92     |
| <b>Group 3</b> | 226                     | 179                                  | 79.20%                                   | 0.7994      | 0.0856                    | 0.0544                        | 0.75 < <i>p</i> > 0.85     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>581</b>              | <b>474</b>                           | <b>81.58%</b>                            |             |                           |                               |                            |

Table 5.1: Number of NPs in corpus

While looking into the article distribution more closely in Table 5.2, it is clear that the most used article form is the null article (35.86% in total). That is not surprising considering the fact that the null article is used with both singular non-count and plural count nouns. Above that, the null article represents also all omitted articles in the corpus.

<sup>46</sup> In some paragraphs, concrete numbers of NPs are stated as we considered it relevant for the description of the corpus and the errors made. However, in the most data tables, only percentages are mentioned to describe the data clearly and comparably with the other tasks.

|                        | Total no. of articles or Ø | Singular (No./%) |               |               |               | Plural (No./%) |            |            |               |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------|
|                        |                            | <i>de</i>        | <i>het</i>    | <i>een</i>    | Ø             | <i>de</i>      | <i>het</i> | <i>een</i> | Ø             |
| <b>Group 1</b>         | 152                        | 15.79%           | 15.13%        | 29.61%        | 21.05%        | 3.29%          | 0%         | 0%         | 15.13%        |
| <b>Group 2</b>         | 143                        | 17.48%           | 11.19%        | 26.57%        | 20.98%        | 1.40%          | 0%         | 0%         | 22.38%        |
| <b>Group 3</b>         | 179                        | 13.97%           | 21.23%        | 30.17%        | 13.41%        | 5.03%          | 0%         | 0%         | 16.20%        |
| <b>Total / Average</b> | <b>474</b>                 | <b>15.61%</b>    | <b>16.24%</b> | <b>28.90%</b> | <b>18.14%</b> | <b>3.38%</b>   | <b>0%</b>  | <b>0%</b>  | <b>17.72%</b> |

Table 5.2: Distribution of articles in corpus

The remaining 107 NPs (18.42%) were preceded by another determiner that is in complementary distribution with articles such as demonstrative and possessive pronouns, and quantifying determiners:

|                        | Total no. of NPs with another determiner | % from total no. of NPs | Demonstratives (% from total NPs) | Possessives (% from total NPs) | Quantifying determiners (% from total NPs) | Negative quantifying determiners (% from total NPs) |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b>         | 36                                       | 19.15%                  | 8.51%                             | 7.45%                          | 2.66%                                      | 0.53%                                               |
| <b>Group 2</b>         | 24                                       | 14.37%                  | 5.99%                             | 5.39%                          | 2.40%                                      | 0.60%                                               |
| <b>Group 3</b>         | 47                                       | 20.70%                  | 7.08%                             | 8.85%                          | 3.54%                                      | 1.33%                                               |
| <b>Total / Average</b> | <b>107</b>                               | <b>18.42%</b>           | <b>7.19%</b>                      | <b>7.23%</b>                   | <b>2.86%</b>                               | <b>0.82%</b>                                        |

Table 5.3: Distribution of other determiners in corpus

The results show that there are no noticeable differences between the use of determiners with respect to the article use across the groups (cf. Ungermannová 2015). After having carried out a single factor ANOVA test, it confirmed that the differences in the article use compared to the use of other determiners across the groups are not statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) (see Table 5.4).

| Source of Variation   | SS     | df | MS     | F     | p-value | F crit |
|-----------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|---------|--------|
| <b>Between Groups</b> | 0.0234 | 2  | 0.0117 | 1.234 | .3046   | 3.295  |
| <b>Within Groups</b>  | 0.3031 | 32 | 0.0095 |       |         |        |
| <b>Total</b>          | 0.3265 | 34 |        |       |         |        |

Table 5.4: ANOVA test of use of articles and other determiners

## 5.1.2 Error analysis

In this paragraph, the results of an error analysis of the free text writing test are described. First, the total number of errors is presented. Second, the errors per group are discussed and compared. Finally, various types of learner's errors are analysed.

### 5.1.2.1 General findings

In total, 474 items were elicited. The results show that the participants on average used a correct article in 85.33% of the tested article forms, whereas in 14.67% of the cases, an incorrect article was opted for. In Table 5.5, correct and incorrect distribution of articles in the free text writing test is shown together with the calculated Confidence intervals. The relatively high standard deviation indicates more variability in the elicited data per group.

|                | <b>Correct use</b> | <b>Incorrect use</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> | <b>Confidence level (95%)</b> | <b>Confidence interval</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b> | 78.29%             | 21.71%               | 0.7878      | 0.1557                    | 0.0989                        | 0.69 < <i>p</i> > 0.89     |
| <b>Group 2</b> | 87.53%             | 12.47%               | 0.8753      | 0.1149                    | 0.0772                        | 0.80 < <i>p</i> > 0.95     |
| <b>Group 3</b> | 90.18%             | 9.82%                | 0.9018      | 0.1223                    | 0.0778                        | 0.82 < <i>p</i> > 0.98     |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>85.33%</b>      | <b>14.67%</b>        |             |                           |                               |                            |

Table 5.5: Correct and incorrect use of articles in free text writing test

Figure 5.1 demonstrates the increasing trend that can be observed across the groups. The higher the expected Dutch language proficiency, the better the article use and the fewer errors made. In general, it stands out that Group 1 scored distinctly lower than the other two groups.

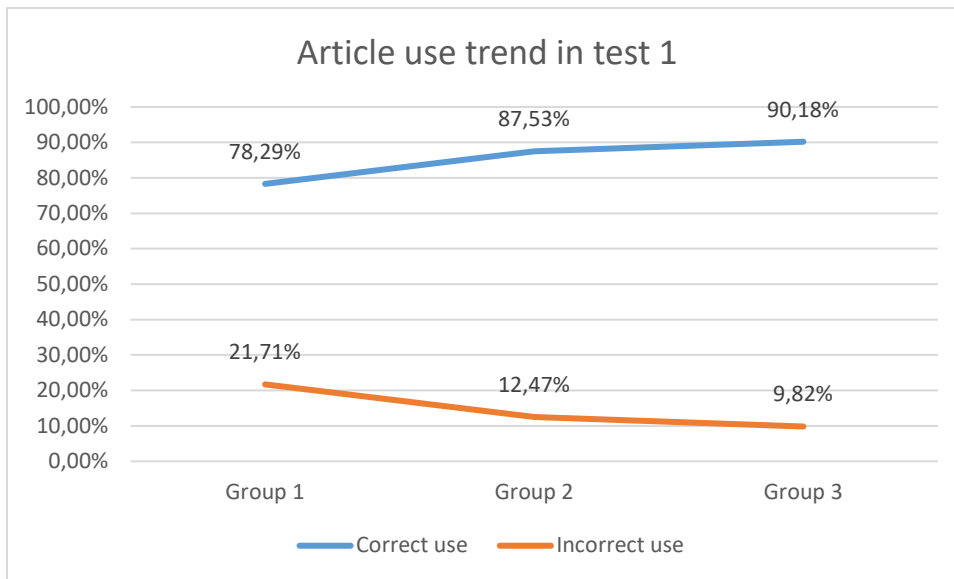


Figure 5.1: Article use trend across groups in free text writing test

However, after having carried out an ANOVA test, it is clear that the differences across the groups are not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). In Table 5.6, calculated values of correct article use are shown describing the correct article use in the free text writing test.

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.0849    | 2         | 0.0425    | 2.4116   | .1058          | 3.2945        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 0.5633    | 32        | 0.0176    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 0.6482    | 34        |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.6: ANOVA test of correct article use across groups in free text writing test

A separate ANOVA test of the data of Group 1 and 3 shows a difference in the  $p$ -value compared to the total data of all the groups. The  $p$ -value changed to .0587 from .1058 (see Table 5.7). Although the difference in the correct article use is still insignificant ( $p > .05$ ), we might see this development as a trend in the article use across the groups.

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.0779    | 1         | 0.0779    | 3.975    | .0587          | 4.3010        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 0.4312    | 22        | 0.0196    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 0.5092    | 23        |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.7: ANOVA test of correct article use of Group 1 and 3 in free text writing test

While examining the total amount of errors, we looked into the earlier defined types of



errors, namely omission and substitution errors. As predicted, omission errors occurred the most when representing 50.32% of all detected errors on average. Surprisingly, Group 2 omitted an article in 61.11% of their errors. Furthermore, the second highest number of errors was substituted due to definiteness. Substitution errors due to gender and countability are following with 11.61% and 7.90%. In the corpus, also one error occurred based on number made by a participant in Group 3. We consider it an individual deviation due to L1 transfer since the participant wrote *\*het Middeleeuwen* (the Middle Ages) and it is expressed by the masculine singular noun *středověk* in Czech. In Table 5.8, a detailed overview of the error distribution per category can be found.

|                      | Total no. of errors | Omission (%)  | Substitution (%) |               |              |              |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|                      |                     |               | Definiteness     | Gender        | Countability | Number       |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 33                  | 54.55%        | 33.33%           | 6.06%         | 6.06%        | 0.00%        |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 18                  | 61.11%        | 27.78%           | 11.11%        | 0.00%        | 0.00%        |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 17                  | 35.29%        | 23.53%           | 17.65%        | 17.65%       | 5.88%        |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>68</b>           | <b>50.32%</b> | <b>28.21%</b>    | <b>11.61%</b> | <b>7.90%</b> | <b>1.96%</b> |

Table 5.8: Distribution of errors across groups in free text writing test

### 5.1.2.2 Omission errors

In order to be able to analyse the results in detail, we relate the errors to various variables. First, we focus on the omission errors related to [±definite] condition. Table 5.9 shows that articles were on average omitted in 11.23% of the cases, where an article was required in Dutch. Group 1 omitted articles in 16.51% of the cases, Group 2 in 12.50% of the cases and Group 3 only in 4.67% of the cases. A significant difference resulting in an increasing correct article use can be observed between Group 1 and Group 3 (see Table 5.10), which corresponds with our predictions in Chapter 3.1.1.

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles |             | Total omission (%) | Omission (%)    |               |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                      | [+definite]                    | [-definite] |                    | <i>de / het</i> | <i>een</i>    |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 58                             | 51          | 16.51%             | 17.24%          | 15.69%        |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 44                             | 44          | 12.50%             | 13.64%          | 11.36%        |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 76                             | 50          | 4.67%              | 3.95%           | 6.00%         |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>178</b>                     | <b>145</b>  | <b>11.23%</b>      | <b>11.61%</b>   | <b>11.01%</b> |

Table 5.9: Distribution of omission errors in [±definite] context

A single factor ANOVA test confirmed the statistically significant differences between the groups in general omission rate as follows ( $p < .05$ ):

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.8406    | 2         | 0.4203    | 4.4292   | .0127          | 3.0240        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 30.3668   | 320       | 0.0945    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 31.2074   | 322       |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.10: ANOVA test of omission in free text writing test

Contrary to our predictions, it is clear that articles were on average omitted the most in [+definite] condition. Interestingly, only Group 3 omitted more articles in [-definite] than [+definite] condition. However, the differences between the two conditions are negligible. In Figure 5.2, a general trend in omission errors is indicated across the groups.

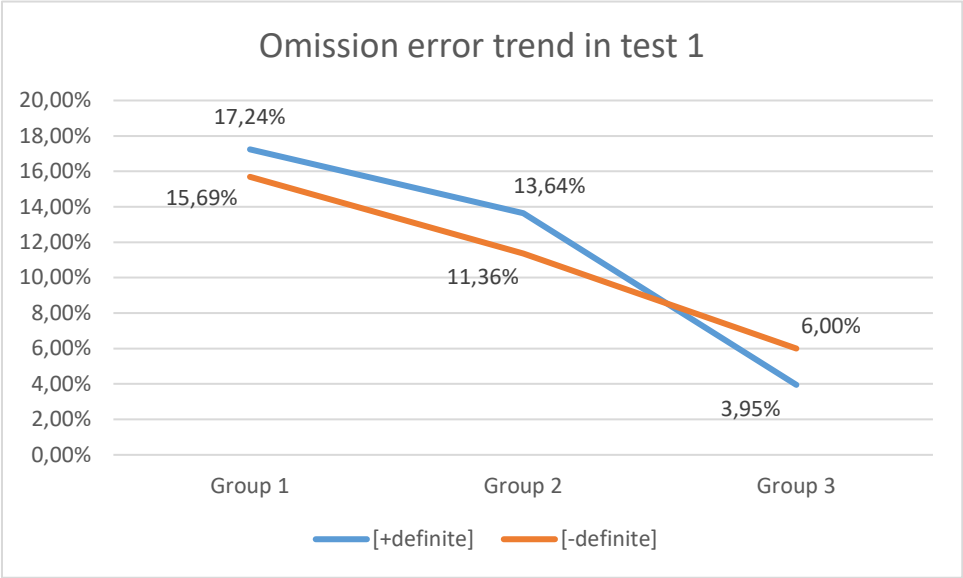


Figure 5.2: Omission trend in free text writing test

When looking into the variable contexts of the omission errors, we observed a considerable number of omission errors occurring in a context pre-modified by an adjective, especially in the corpus of Group 1. This would support the Syntactic Misanalysis Account as argued by Trenkić (2007, 2008, 2009). It is obvious that articles are omitted more often in adjectivally modified contexts than in *Art + N* contexts. However, after having compared the number of omission errors in *Art + Adj + N* contexts with the omission errors in *Art + N* contexts, it is

clear that the pre-modification by an adjective cannot be the only reason for all omission errors (see Table 5.11).

|                      | <b>Total no. of NPs with <i>Art</i> + <i>N</i></b> | <b>Total no. of NPs with <i>Art</i> + <i>Adj</i> + <i>N</i></b> | <b>Total omission (%)</b> | <b>Omission in <i>Art</i> + <i>N</i> (%)</b> | <b>Omission in <i>Art</i> + <i>Adj</i> + <i>N</i> (%)</b> |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 65                                                 | 41                                                              | 16.07%                    | 12.68%                                       | 21.95%                                                    |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 53                                                 | 34                                                              | 13.41%                    | 14.58%                                       | 11.76%                                                    |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 77                                                 | 42                                                              | 4.62%                     | 2.27%                                        | 9.52%                                                     |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>195</b>                                         | <b>117</b>                                                      | <b>11.37%</b>             | <b>9.84%</b>                                 | <b>14.41%</b>                                             |

Table 5.11: Distribution of omission errors in adjectivally modified context

Interestingly, the results show that once an intensifier preceded the adjective in an NP (*Art* + *INT* + *Adj* + *N*), articles were even more likely to be omitted (96).

- (96) \*Hoi Marie, ik heb [een] *heel interessant boek* gelezen.  
Hi Marie, I have read a very interesting book.

Based on the results, we were also interested in the specifics of the omitted [+definite] articles. Contrary to the assumption of Trenkić (2009: 123-127), no errors were made across the groups when referring to a salient referent (second and further mentions of a [+definite] referent).

Finally, Trenkić (2000: 215-218) proposed that abstractness of nouns might have impact on distribution of articles. After having analysed our data, we assume that the participants in our study might have primarily omitted articles in [+definite] contexts due to abstractness of the nouns used since 63.33% of the omitted articles in [+definite] contexts preceded an abstract noun.

### 5.1.2.3 Substitution errors

Besides the omission errors, also substitution errors were analysed. As shown in Chapter 5.1.2.1, substitution errors were primarily made due to definiteness and gender.

Referring to that, we analysed the contexts of the substitution errors made based on definiteness (see Table 5.12). In accordance with the omission errors, fewer errors are made by the advanced Group 3. In [-definite] contexts, the difference between Group 1 and Group 3 is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) (see Table 5.13). We might argue that the indefinite article *een*

is acquired later than the definite articles *de* and *het* which caused the observed overuse of these articles by Group 1.

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles |             | Total substitution (%) | Substitution (%)              |                                   |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                      | [+definite]                    | [-definite] |                        | <i>de / het</i> by <i>een</i> | <i>een / Ø</i> by <i>de / het</i> |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 58                             | 54          | 8.93%                  | 5.17%                         | 12.96%                            |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 44                             | 38          | 6.10%                  | 0.00%                         | 13.16%                            |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 76                             | 54          | 3.85%                  | 3.95%                         | 3.70%                             |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>178</b>                     | <b>146</b>  | <b>6.33%</b>           | <b>3.04%</b>                  | <b>9.94%</b>                      |

Table 5.12: Distribution of substitution errors in [ $\pm$ definite] context

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 1.0823    | 1         | 1.0823    | 9.4415   | .0024          | 3.8919        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 21.3219   | 186       | 0.1146    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 22.4043   | 187       |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.13: ANOVA test of substitution in [-definite] context of Group 1 and 3 in free text writing test

In general, it is clear that the substitution errors based on definiteness were more likely to be made in [-definite] contexts (see Figure 5.3). On average, 9.94% participants substituted the indefinite article *een* or the null article by the definite articles *de* or *het*.

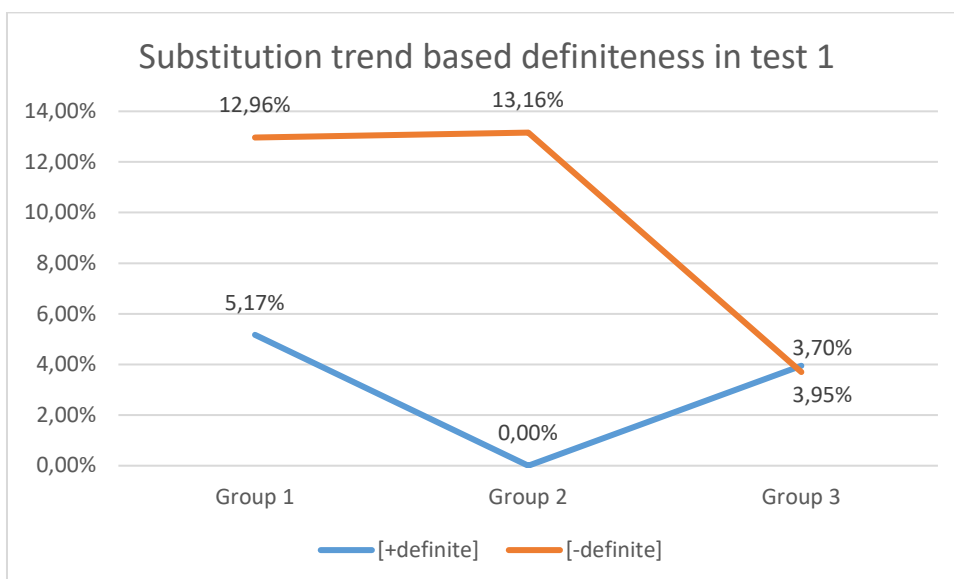


Figure 5.3: Substitution trend based on definiteness in free text writing test

We assume that the participants might have struggled while introducing a new referent into the discourse when the referent was uniquely identifiable. In (97), the Dutch writer Esther Gerritsen was for the first time mentioned in the discourse, but due to the identifiability of the referent, it is not allowed to use an indefinite article in Dutch.

- (97) \*Het boek heet Dorst van *een* [de] *Nederlandse schrijfster Esther Gerritsen*.  
The book is called Dorst by the Dutch writer Esther Gerritsen.

Finally, substitution errors due to gender were examined. The results show that there were no significant differences between the substitution in [-neuter] and [+neuter] contexts (see Table 5.14).

|                      | Total no. of NPs in<br>[singular][+definite] |           | Total<br>substitution<br>(%) | Substitution (%)           |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|                      | [-neuter]                                    | [+neuter] |                              | <i>de</i><br>by <i>het</i> | <i>het</i><br>by <i>de</i> |
|                      |                                              |           |                              | [-neuter]                  | [+neuter]                  |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 24                                           | 23        | 4.26%                        | 4.17%                      | 4.35%                      |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 25                                           | 16        | 4.88%                        | 4.00%                      | 6.25%                      |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 26                                           | 37        | 3.17%                        | 3.85%                      | 2.70%                      |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>75</b>                                    | <b>76</b> | <b>6.33%</b>                 | <b>4.01%</b>               | <b>4.43%</b>               |

Table 5.14: Distribution of substitution errors based on gender in free text writing

Interestingly, the participants seem to be more likely to substitute *de* by *het* than expected. This contradicts our predictions that the participants would overgeneralise the more frequently used *de* in contexts where *het* is required. Figure 5.4 shows the substitution trend across the groups.

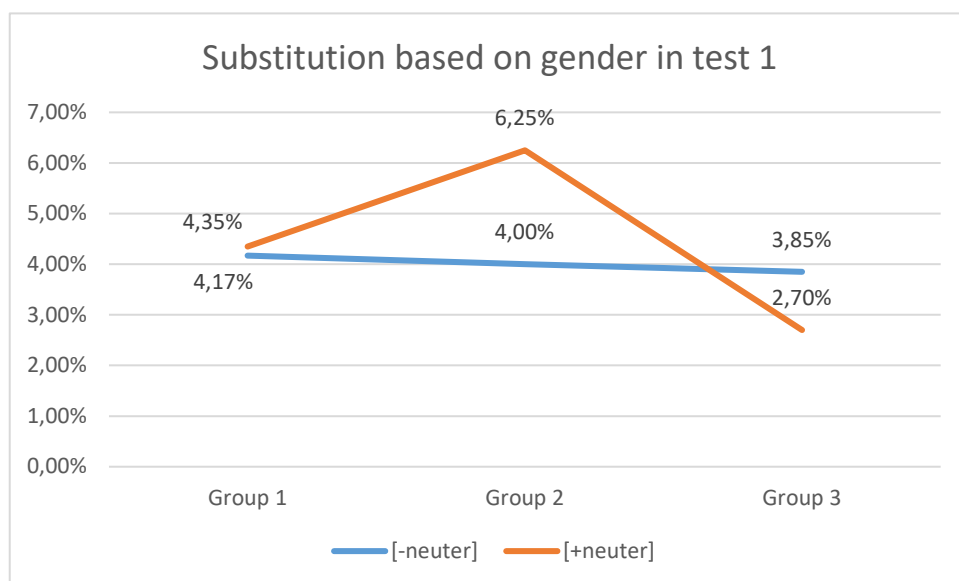


Figure 5.4: Substitution trend based on gender in free text writing test

We assume that the participants, especially in Group 3, are generally aware of the gender feature in Dutch and might have tried to use the definite article *het* in the discourse resulting in incorrect use in some cases (98). However, the total number of cases is very low and we can consider it rather an individual deviation than a statistically significant pattern.

- (98) \*Ik vind *het* [de] *manier van schrijven* over familierelaties en dood zeer interessant.  
I find the way of writing about family relations and death very interesting.

In general, we presume that the overuse of *het* might be caused by the higher attention to this definite article during the Dutch language acquisition. It is a comparable overgeneralisation based on possibly higher focus on this phenomenon in explicit FL instructions as seen when overgeneralising the irregular ending *-en* with regular verbs in Dutch.

Above that, the high frequency of the words *het boek* (the book) and *het verhaal* (the story) in the corpus might have affected this result since these well-known words might have increased the overall success percentage of article use in [+neuter] contexts.

## 5.2 Translation test

A translation test was chosen to examine article use in the learner's written language with more attention to form. In written utterances, learners are generally more focusing on the form of the produced language. While translating, on the one hand, learners attempt to communicate

meaning, but on the other hand, they are given a certain context which requires a greater control of metalinguistic knowledge.

In comparison to the free text writing test, it is possible to elicit data over directly comparable NPs. Although learners can still use some strategies to avoid article use by using other language tools to express definiteness in the translation such as demonstrative pronouns.

### 5.2.1 Data description

For the purpose of this research, a short text was written in Dutch composed of ten sentences (see Appendix 2). The text contained a total number of 27 NPs of which 26 NPs are preceded by articles *de*, *het*, *een* or the null article. To facilitate the analysis, the occurrence of each noun was categorised according to the earlier mentioned criteria: number, gender, countability, concreteness, syntactic context, order of appearance, pre-modification, idiomatic use. Following that, the NP *een groot deel* (a large part) in (99), for example, was classified as: singular, count, neuter, subject, first mention, pre-modified.

- (99) *Een groot deel van de inwoners* beweert dat de Nederlandse identiteit wel bestaat.  
A large part of the inhabitants claims that the Dutch identity does exist.

The same approach of defining NPs was applied in this data analysis as explained earlier (see Chapter 5.1.1). Therefore, NPs in coordination were analysed separately. In the results, coordinated NPs occurred in which an article was used in front of the first NP, but the second NP was not preceded by any article. Given the context, we assume that the article is related to all NPs. In (100), it is shown that more article forms are acceptable in that context.

- (100) Het zijn vooral *de Nederlandse taal*, maar ook *(de) nationale feestdagen*, *(de) tradities* en *(de) gewoonten*.  
It is mainly the Dutch language, but also (the) national holidays, (the) traditions and (the) customs.

In the first NP *de Nederlandse taal* (the Dutch language), the definite article is required. However, in the following NPs, the use of articles is facultative.

Furthermore, the text focused on article use with abstract nouns (101). According to Trenkić

(2000), abstract nouns might cause difficulties when acquiring correct article use.

- (101) Ook *vrijheid* is een *belangrijk kenmerk* van de *Nederlandse identiteit*.  
Freedom is also an important characteristic of the Dutch identity.

Finally, the text contained also some specific NPs such as proper names *Nederland* (the Netherlands), *Nederlanders* (Dutch people) and *Willem-Alexander*.

### 5.2.2 Control group

In order to be able to define whether an article form produced by the Czech participants is correct, we elicited data about article use by native speakers in the form of a cloze test. In the source text in Dutch, articles were left out and the native speakers needed to fill in the gaps. It was not specified that articles needed to be filled in so that the native speakers could fill in demonstrative pronouns (and other word sorts) as well.<sup>47</sup> This approach corresponds with the principle of the translation test in view of the fact that the Czech participants could have avoided article use as well.

We are aware that the requirements of the cloze test in Dutch are different from the requirements of the translation test from Czech into Dutch. However, we decided to compare the results of both tests, because the cloze test offers a practical tool for native speakers to demonstrate how articles are used in a comparable context. It would not be valid to let the native speakers translate the same text from another language into Dutch since the language from which the text would be translated might have affected the article choice of the native speakers. Above that, in both cases the role of the speaker and the hearer are combined in one since the participants are faced with a text produced by somebody else (the role of the hearer), but without articles to define the original context. Therefore, the participants have to analyse the context and choose articles accordingly (the role of the speaker). Trenkić (2000: 202) supported this approach as follows: “In languages that do not obligatorily encode definiteness, the hearer’s (translator’s) role is very much like the role of the English speaker reconstructing the context

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<sup>47</sup> In some cases, the native speakers filled in a preposition which was an acceptable option in the following test sentence:

- (i) Als  $\emptyset$  *toeristen aan Nederland* denken, dan denken ze vaak *aan  $\emptyset$  tulpen en aan*  
 *$\emptyset$  molens*.  
When tourists think of the Netherlands, they often think of tulips and windmills.

For the purpose of our analysis, we assumed that the native speaker used the null article, since no article was filled in after the second preposition.



without the articles”, when using a cloze test in English prepared for native speakers and a translation test for Serbian speakers in her research.

The results from the cloze test taken by native Dutch speakers show that their article use is not always consistent and that there are some form varieties appearing. Depending on the frequency of use of such a form, it is considered to be the norm for the learner’s interlanguage production or an individual deviation as described earlier (see Chapter 4.5).

Generally, the majority of the control group of native speakers performed as predicted and the article use by the native speakers was quite homogenous. In 11 out of the 26 NPs, a certain article form was opted for by all native speakers. For example, in item 19 (102), a sentence is shown in which the same article was chosen by all native speakers (see Figure 5.5).

- (102) *Nederland is een koninkrijk.*  
The Netherlands is a kingdom.

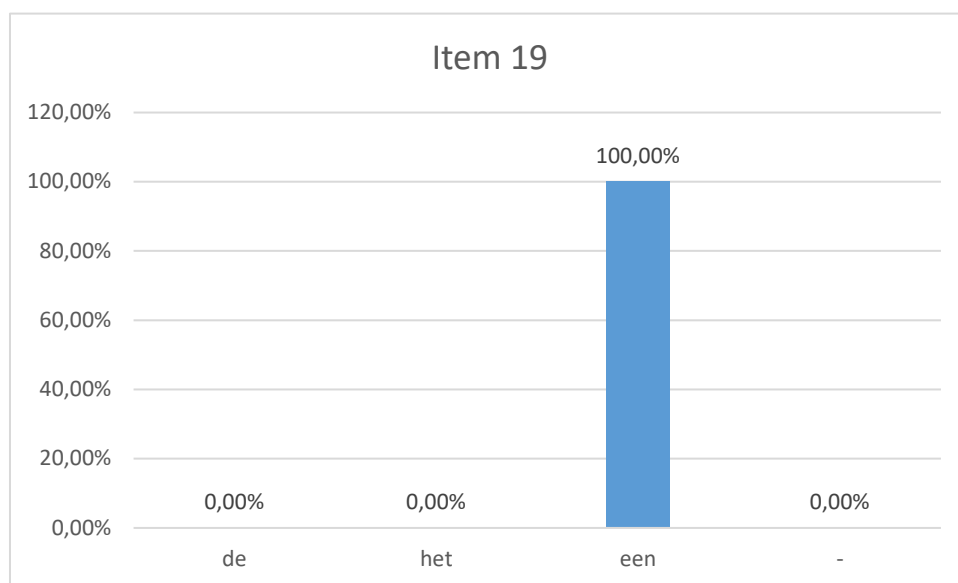


Figure 5.5: Distribution of articles in item 19

In other cases (103), on the other hand, one or two native speakers opted for another form than the rest of the control group (see Figure 5.6). In these cases, we considered that form an individual deviation and did not take it as the norm for the learner’s interlanguage production.

- (103) *\*Een [de] koninklijke familie is daarom ook nauw verbonden met dit land.*  
A royal family is therefore also closely associated with this country.

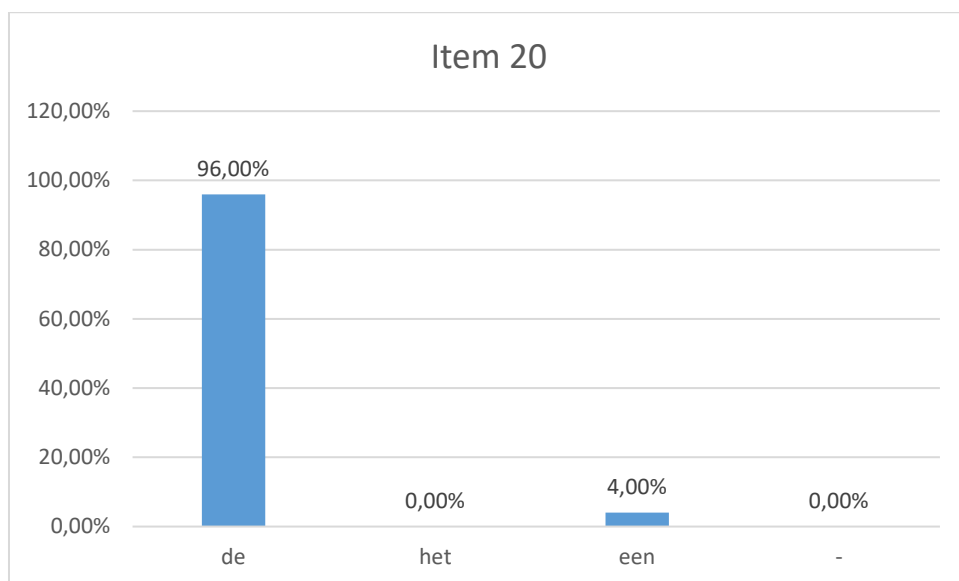


Figure 5.6: Distribution of articles in item 20

In the text, a large number of bare NPs in plural with the null article occurred such as in example (104).

- (104) *Als Ø toeristen aan Nederland denken, dan denken ze vaak aan Ø tulpen en Ø molens.*

When tourists think of the Netherlands, they often think of tulips and windmills.

The majority of the native speakers used the null article in such cases. However, there were also 12% of the native speakers who used *de* with NP *toeristen* (tourists) and 8% of the native speakers who used *de* with NPs *tulpen* (tulips) and *molens* (windmills). The distribution of articles by the native speakers in items 1-4 is shown in Figure 5.7.

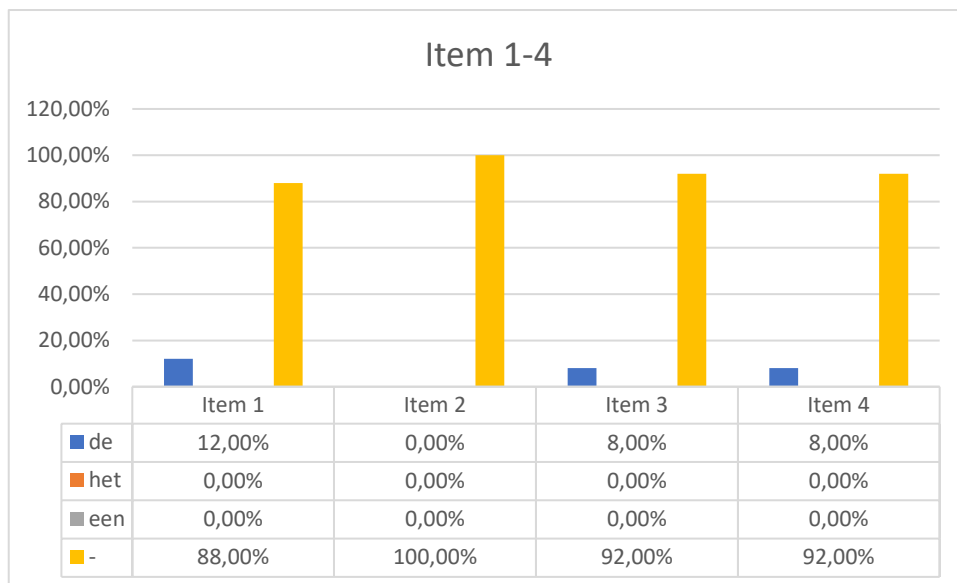


Figure 5.7: Distribution of articles in items 1-4

We assume that in item 1, the native speakers might have considered the NP as a generic group wherefore they used the definite article. In this case, a generic reading of the definite NP in plural is possible since the characteristic might apply to all members of the group (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 811, § 14.3.2). In item 3 and 4, the native speakers might have seen the NPs as generic symbols as well, but in this case, it is not possible to read it generically as we cannot refer to all members of the whole group. Following our norm definition based on the native speaker's data, we considered both form variances in NP *toeristen* (tourists) correct in the learner's interlanguage production as more than 10% of the native speakers opted for this form, whereas use of the definite article in NPs *tulpen* (tulips) and *molens* (windmills) was considered incorrect since less than 10% of the native speakers chose this form.

Besides a few other individual deviations, the native speakers filled in article forms as expected according to general grammatical rules. Only in one case (105), we observed an interesting deviation from the expected form chosen by more than three native speakers. While the majority of the native speakers opted for the expected form, namely the null article, seven native speakers chose *de* (see Figure 5.8).

- (105) Op Koningsdag viert Nederland de verjaardag van  $\emptyset$  koning Willem-Alexander.  
On King's Day, the Netherlands celebrates the birthday of King Willem-Alexander.

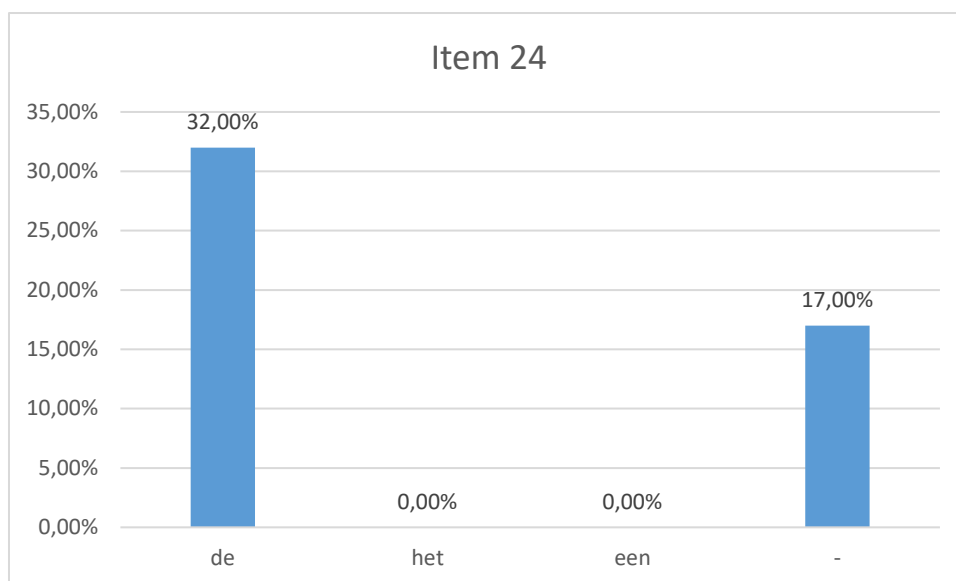


Figure 5.8: Distribution of articles in item 24

According to Haeseryn et al. (1997: 200-201, § 4.5.4), articles regularly do not precede nominals with proper names with a unique reference since the mentioned person or item can be identified unambiguously. We consider example (105) as such a case and the deviation from the norm as a mistake by the native speakers. Therefore, we excluded this NP from the analysed data.

### 5.2.3 Participants

In this paragraph, the results from the translation test are described. Firstly, the total number of errors is presented. Secondly, the errors per group are discussed and compared. Finally, various types of learner's errors are analysed.

#### 5.2.3.1 General findings

In total, 26 items were tested. However, it is important to point out that the number of NPs per respondent might deviate since the respondents might have translated the source text differently. In the presented calculations, the actual number of the tested NPs per respondent was used compared to the actual number of errors in such NPs. In case the participants avoided article use by using other word sorts or describing the meaning of the sentence differently, we excluded these forms from the analysis in order to be able to look into directly comparable NPs.

The results show that 85.63% of the tested article forms were on average filled in correctly, whereas in 14.41% of the cases, an incorrect article was used. In Table 5.15, correct and

incorrect distribution of articles in the translation test is shown together with the calculated Confidence intervals.

|                | Correct use   | Incorrect use | Mean   | Standard deviation | Confidence level (95%) | Confidence interval    |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b> | 78.60%        | 21.40%        | 0.7853 | 0.1309             | 0.0831                 | 0.70 < <i>p</i> > 0.87 |
| <b>Group 2</b> | 88.35%        | 11.65%        | 0.8828 | 0.0716             | 0.0481                 | 0.83 < <i>p</i> > 0.93 |
| <b>Group 3</b> | 89.83%        | 10.17%        | 0.8973 | 0.0933             | 0.0593                 | 0.84 < <i>p</i> > 0.96 |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>85.63%</b> | <b>14.41%</b> |        |                    |                        |                        |

Table 5.15: Correct and incorrect distribution of articles in translation test

Figure 5.9 demonstrates that an increasing trend in correct article use can be observed between the groups, which matches the results of the free text writing test. The higher the Dutch language proficiency level, the better article use and the fewer errors made. While Group 1 scored with 78.60%, Group 2 and Group 3 used a correct article in 88.35% and 89.93% of the cases.

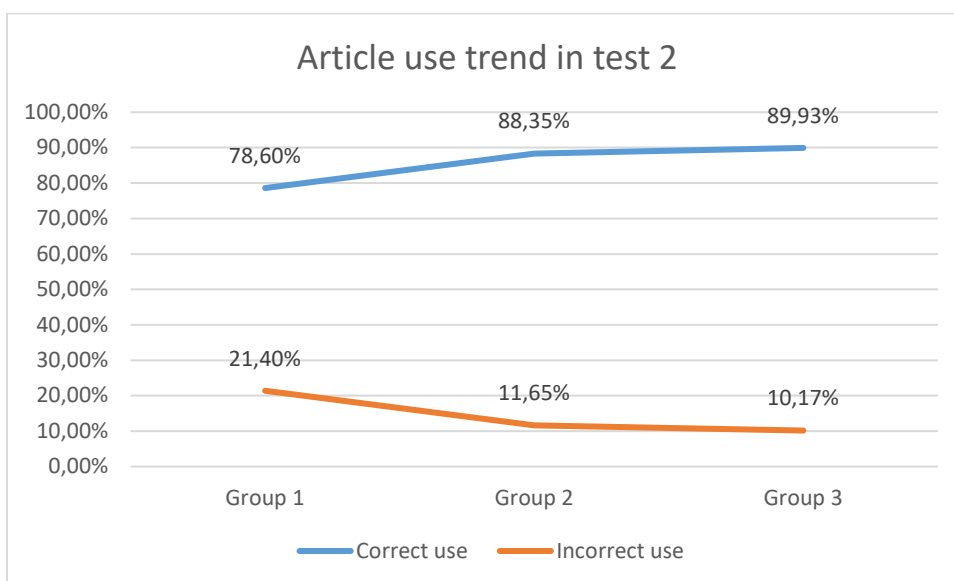


Figure 5.9: Article use trend across the groups in translation test

A single factor ANOVA test confirmed that the differences across the groups are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). In Table 5.16, calculated values of correct article use are shown presenting the results from the translation test.

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.0882    | 2         | 0.0441    | 4.2077   | .0239          | 3.2945        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 0.3356    | 32        | 0.0105    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 0.4238    | 34        |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.16: ANOVA test of correct article use across groups in translation test

Having described the correct article use, also the incorrect article use was analysed in detail. From the results, it is clear that omission errors occurred the most often, which also corresponds with the results from the free text writing text. Substitution errors follow with 31.80%. In addition to substitution errors based on definiteness, gender and countability, we analysed also errors in special use of articles separately (see Table 5.17). As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the source text was characterized by a high number of proper names wherefore special use of articles applies. It explicitly concerned the following words: *Nederland* (the Netherlands), *Koningsdag* (King’s Day) and *Willem-Alexander*. We will look into the article use with these nouns in Chapter 5.2.3.3. No substitution errors based on number occurred in the translation test.

|                      | <b>Total no. of errors</b> | <b>Omission (%)</b> | <b>Substitution (%)</b> |              |              |               |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
|                      |                            |                     | Definiteness            | Gender       | Countability | Special use   |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 64                         | 43.75%              | 29.69%                  | 6.25%        | 3.13%        | 17.19%        |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 31                         | 38.71%              | 29.03%                  | 9.68%        | 6.45%        | 16.13%        |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 30                         | 40.00%              | 36.67%                  | 13.33%       | 0.00%        | 10.00%        |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>125</b>                 | <b>40.82%</b>       | <b>31.80%</b>           | <b>9.75%</b> | <b>3.19%</b> | <b>14.44%</b> |

Table 5.17: Distribution of errors in translation test

From the results, it is evident that the number of errors by Group 1 is much higher than by other groups. Further, we can see that approximately 40% of all errors were made due to omission of articles. In the following paragraphs, we will look into the error types more closely.

### 5.2.3.2 Omission errors

Following the same analysis method, we examined the omission errors in [ $\pm$ definite] contexts. Table 5.18 indicates that Group 1 left out an article significantly more than the other two groups. For all groups, [-definite] context seems to have caused the most difficulties.

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles |             | Total omission (%)<br>[±definite] | Omission (%)                   |                           |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                      | [+definite]                    | [-definite] |                                   | <i>de / het</i><br>[+definite] | <i>een</i><br>[-definite] |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 106                            | 47          | 18.30%                            | 16.98%                         | 21.28%                    |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 88                             | 43          | 10.34%                            | 5.68%                          | 16.28%                    |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 104                            | 55          | 7.55%                             | 7.69%                          | 7.27%                     |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>298</b>                     | <b>145</b>  | <b>12.06%</b>                     | <b>10.12%</b>                  | <b>14.94%</b>             |

Table 5.18: Distribution of omission errors in [±definite] contexts

The omission error trend can be seen in Figure 5.10.

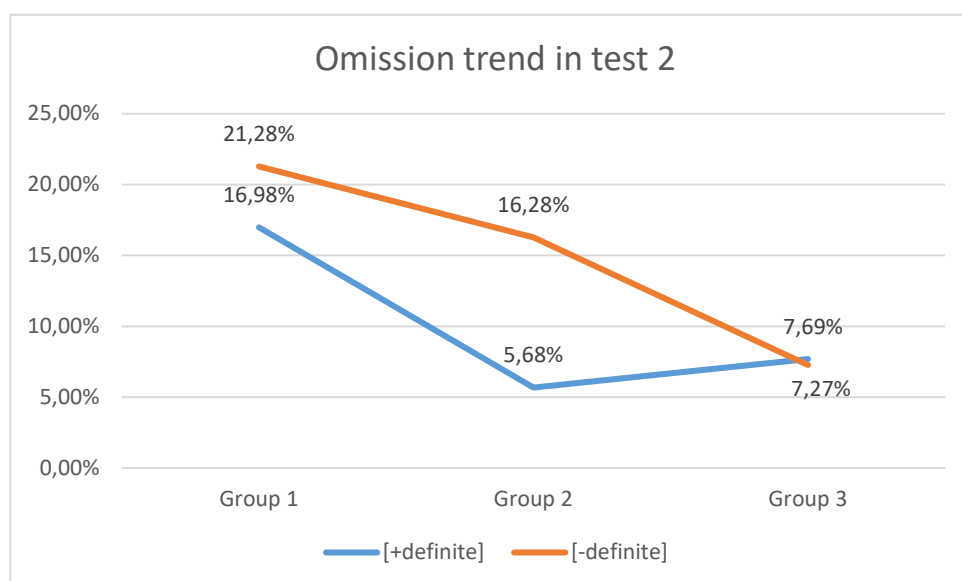


Figure 5.10: Omission trend in translation test

A single factor ANOVA test confirmed the statistically significant differences between the groups in the omission rate as follows ( $p < .05$ ):

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 1.0252    | 2         | 0.5126    | 5.0267   | .0069          | 3.0162        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 44.8709   | 440       | 0.1020    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 45.89616  | 442       |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.19: ANOVA test of omission in translation test

We carried out also an additional ANOVA test to examine whether the differences between the [+definite] and [-definite] contexts are significant, but that was not the case.

Interestingly, we observed a high correlation between the total number of omission errors

and the number of abstract nouns. According to Trenkić (2000: 218), FL learners might omit articles more in the contexts of abstract nouns. In the translation test, articles that preceded an abstract noun were often omitted. The source text included abstract words such as *identiteit* (identity) and *taal* (language). In (106), common errors appearing in the elicited data are shown.

(106) \*Ook *een* [Ø] *vrijheid* is [een] *heel belangrijke kenmerk* van [de] *nederlandse identiteit*.

Freedom is also an important characteristic of the Dutch identity.

### 5.2.3.3 Substitution errors

After having analysed the omission errors, we present the substitution errors in more detail. As shown in Chapter 5.2.3.1, substitution errors were primarily made due to definiteness, gender and with proper names.

Therefore, we analysed the contexts of the substitution errors based on definiteness and the results show that the substitution errors based on definiteness were more likely to be made in [-definite] contexts (see Table 5.20 and Figure 5.11). On average, 8.83% participants substituted the indefinite article *een* or the null article by the definite articles *de* or *het*. This confirms the pattern observed in the free text writing test.

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles or Ø |             | Total substitution (%) | Substitution (%)              |                                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                      | [+definite]                         | [-definite] |                        | <i>de / het</i> by <i>een</i> | <i>een / Ø</i> by <i>de / het</i> |
|                      | [+definite]                         | [-definite] | [±definite]            | [+definite]                   | [-definite]                       |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 106                                 | 121         | 8.37%                  | 4.72%                         | 11.57%                            |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 88                                  | 116         | 4.41%                  | 2.27%                         | 6.03%                             |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 104                                 | 124         | 4.82%                  | 0.00%                         | 8.87%                             |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>298</b>                          | <b>361</b>  | <b>5.87%</b>           | <b>2.33%</b>                  | <b>8.83%</b>                      |

Table 5.20: Distribution of substitution errors in [±definite] context



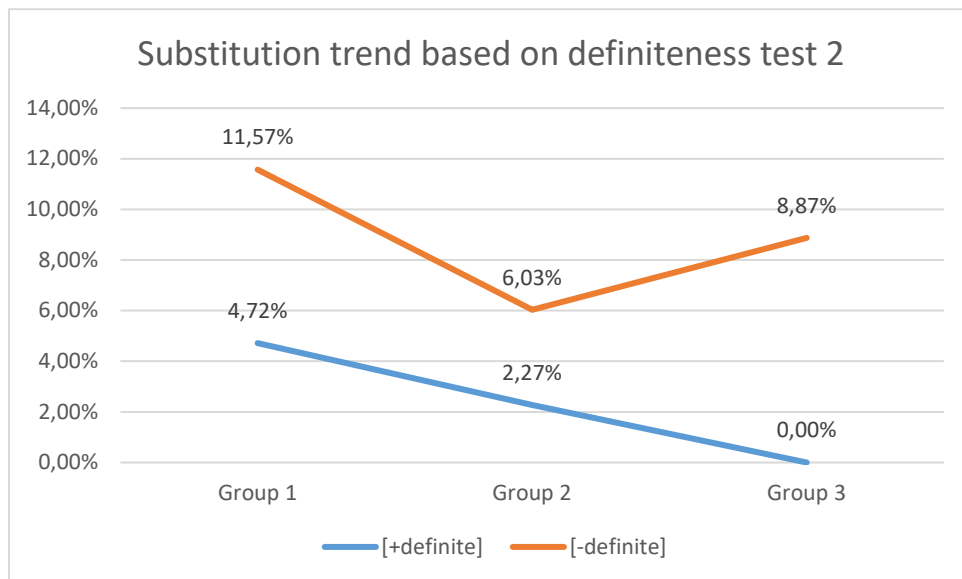


Figure 5.11: Substitution trend based on definiteness in translation test

We assume that the participants might have struggled when introducing a new referent into the discourse when the referent was abstract and referred to a specific general knowledge. In (107), the participants tended to use the definite article *het*, although *een* was required.

(107) \*Nederland is *het* [een] *koninkrijk*.

The Netherlands is a kingdom.

Furthermore, substitution errors due to gender were examined. The results indicate that again no extensive differences occurred between the substitution in [-neuter] and [+neuter] contexts in general:

|                      | Total no. of NPs in [singular][+definite] |           | Total substitution (%) | Substitution (%)        |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                      | [-neuter]                                 | [+neuter] |                        | <i>de</i> by <i>het</i> | <i>het</i> by <i>de</i> |
|                      |                                           |           | [±neuter]              | [-neuter]               | [+neuter]               |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 59                                        | 18        | 5.19%                  | 1.69%                   | 16.67%                  |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 50                                        | 15        | 4.62%                  | 6.00%                   | 0.00%                   |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 52                                        | 18        | 5.71%                  | 5.77%                   | 5.56%                   |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>161</b>                                | <b>51</b> | <b>5.17%</b>           | <b>4.49%</b>            | <b>7.41%</b>            |

Table 5.21: Distribution of substitution errors based on gender in translation test

Only Group 1 scored as predicted, namely overgeneralising the more frequently used *de* in

contexts where *het* is required. From the elicited data, it is clear that the participants from Group 1 failed to use the correct article with the noun *land* (country), which is *het* in Dutch (108).

- (108) \**De* [het] *hele land* kleurt oranje.  
The whole country turns orange.

Figure 5.12 shows the substitution trend across the groups. Although the figure clearly manifests that the participants from Group 1 overgeneralised the definite article *de* in the translation test, it is not yet possible to consider it a significant pattern in their article use since no such apparent observations were made in the free text writing test. On the other hand, the learners had the possibility to avoid unknown nominals in the free text writing test, whereas the source text for the translation was given.

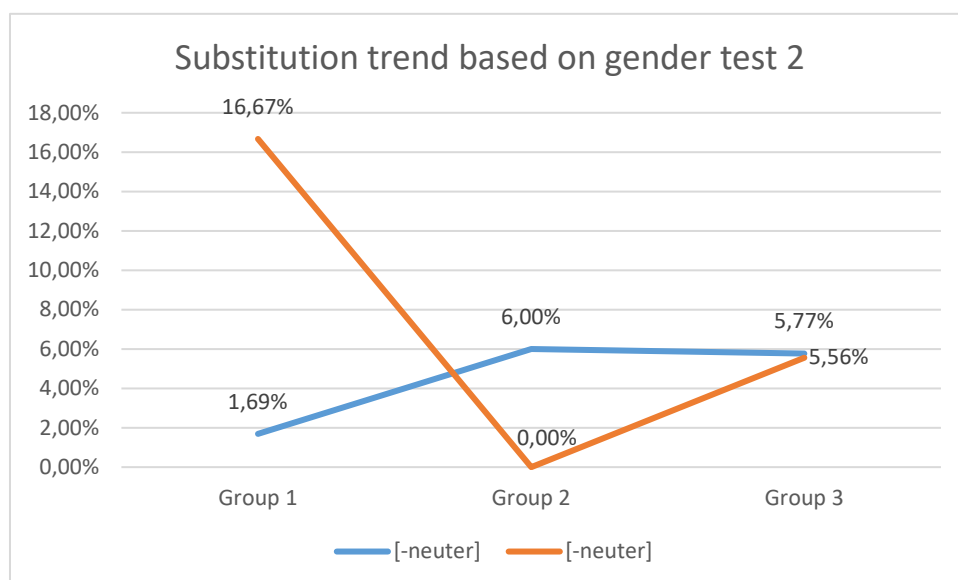


Figure 5.12: Substitution trend based on gender in translation test

Finally, we briefly discuss also the article use with the earlier mentioned proper names of a country, a national holiday and a person. In all three cases, the null article is required in bare use in Dutch. While *Nederland* and *Willem-Alexander* were mostly correctly used without any article in the elicited data, the expression *op Koningsdag* (on King's Day) caused many errors. Table 5.22 shows the success percentages with these three specific proper names. We can see that the majority of the participants of Group 1 opted for an incorrect article. In the most error cases, the definite article *de* was chosen. The higher the language proficiency level, the fewer errors made in the special use for articles (see Figure 5.13). This corresponds with our

predictions described in Chapter 3.1.2. We assume that the FL learners expand their metalinguistic knowledge of article use in Dutch depending of exposure to Dutch language acquisition. However, we are aware of the fact that the examined sample might be too small to be able to draw such general conclusions.

|                        | <i>Nederland</i> |               |                | <i>Koningsdag</i> |               |                | <i>Willem-Alexander</i> |             |                |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|
|                        | No.              | Correct use   | Incor-rect use | No.               | Correct use   | Incor-rect use | No.                     | Correct use | Incor-rect use |
| <b>Group 1</b>         | 48               | 91.67%        | 8.33%          | 12                | 41.67%        | 58.33%         | 12                      | 100%        | 0%             |
| <b>Group 2</b>         | 40               | 100%          | 0%             | 11                | 54.55%        | 45.45%         | 11                      | 100%        | 0%             |
| <b>Group 3</b>         | 43               | 97.67%        | 2.33%          | 12                | 83.33%        | 16.67%         | 12                      | 100%        | 0%             |
| <b>Total / Average</b> | <b>131</b>       | <b>96.45%</b> | <b>3.55%</b>   | <b>35</b>         | <b>59.85%</b> | <b>40.15%</b>  | <b>35</b>               | <b>100%</b> | <b>0%</b>      |

Table 5.22: Correct and incorrect article use with proper names in translation test

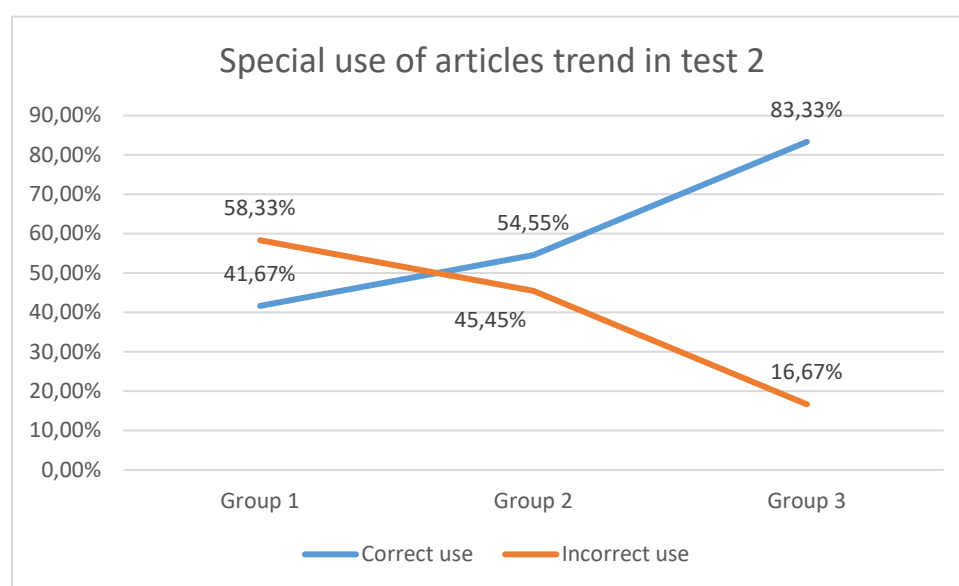


Figure 5.13: Special use of articles trend in translation test

### 5.3 Forced-choice elicitation test

In the forced-choice elicitation test, the participants were faced with a series of dialogues in Dutch. The target article form was missing and the participants had to choose one of the following options provided: *de*, *het*, *een*, a dash representing that no article was needed or *geen*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Geen* (no) was only available in one dialogue. Although we are primarily testing article use, we included a dialogue where *geen* needed to be filled in as a negative counterpart of the indefinite article *een* and the null article

While the free text writing and translation tests show how FL learners use articles, the forced-choice elicitation test primarily focuses on the learner's declarative knowledge while more explicitly testing what the learners know about how articles are used in Dutch. This reflects the basic distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge, and also explicit and implicit knowledge (Ullman 2001, 2004). In the forced-choice elicitation test, it was not possible to avoid article use since the learners had to fully focus on the form of articles.

### 5.3.1 Data description

For the purpose of this research, 26 situations were written (see Appendix 1) in order to examine article use in certain contexts focusing on definiteness and specificity (cf. Ionin et al. 2004, 2008, 2009).

In total, 32 NPs were the subject of testing. These 32 items were categorised into five categories:

1. [+definite, +specific]
2. [+definite, -specific]
3. [-definite, -specific]
4. [-definite, +specific]
5. Special use of articles

Four categories focus on definiteness and specificity (see examples 109-112) and the fifth category examines the learner's metalinguistic knowledge regarding special use of articles in Dutch. In that category, categorial (113), generic use (114) of articles and idiomatic use (115) were included.

(109) [+definite, +specific]

*Op het politiebureau*

Politieagent René: Ik heb je al lang niet gezien.

Politieagent Ruud: Sorry, ik heb het druk. We zoeken \_\_\_\_\_

---

(Broekhuis & Den Dikken 2012: 677-678):

(i) *Op bezoek*

Jos: Kan ik je \_\_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *kopje koffie* aanbieden?

Joyce: Nee, dank je wel. Ik lust \_\_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / geen / -) *koffie*.

*Visiting*

Jos: Can I offer you a cup of coffee?

Joyce: No, thank you. I don't like coffee.

(de / het / een / -) *gevluchte moordenaar* van mevrouw De Wit. Zijn naam is Piet Deugniet.

*At the police station*

Police officer René: I haven't seen you in a long time.

Police officer Ruud: Sorry, I'm busy. We are searching for the escaped murderer of Mrs. De Wit. His name is Piet Deugniet.

(110) [+definite, -specific]

*In de winkel*

Bediende: Hoe kan ik u helpen?

Klant: Ik wil graag met \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *eigenaar van deze zaak* spreken. Het maakt me niet uit wie het is. Ik wil een klacht indienen.

*In the shop*

Clerk: How can I help you?

Customer: I would like to talk to the owner of this shop. I don't care who it is. I want to file a complaint.

(111) [-definite, -specific]

*Aan de universiteit*

Student: Ik ben op zoek naar professor De Jonge.

Assistent: Volgens mij heeft hij nu een afspraak met \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *studente*. Ik weet helaas niet wie zij is wanneer professor De Jonge terugkomt.

*At the university*

Student: I am looking for Professor De Jonge.

Assistant: I think he has an appointment with a student now. Unfortunately, I don't know who she is and when Professor De Jonge will return.

(112) [-definite, +specific]

Monique: We hebben \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *nieuwe collega*. Hij heet Arthur en is heel behulpzaam.

Christina: Fijn om te horen. Ik hoop hem snel te ontmoeten.  
Monique: We have got a new colleague. His name is Arthur and he is very helpful.  
Christina: Good to hear. I hope to meet him soon.

(113) Categorical use of articles

*In de biologieles*

Leraar: \_\_\_\_ (De / Het / Een / -) *dolfijn* is een zoogdier.  
Scholier: Betekent dat dat \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / geen / -) *dolfijnen* geen vissen zijn?  
Leraar: Precies.

*In the biology class*

Teacher: A dolphin is a mammal.  
Student: Does that mean that dolphins are not fish?  
Teacher: Exactly.

(114) Generic use of articles

Jolette: In een artikel stond geschreven dat \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *Fransman* dagelijks kaas eet en wijn drinkt.  
Maarten: Wat een stereotype!  
Jolette: Dat vind ik ook.  
Jolette: In an article, it was written that the Frenchman eats cheese and drinks wine every day.  
Maarten: What a stereotype!  
Jolette: I think so too.

(115) Idiomatic use of articles

Angela: Weet jij hoe oud Margriet is?  
Henriette: Nee, maar zij zal rond \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *dertig* zijn.  
Angela: Do you know how old Margriet is?  
Henriette: No, but she will be around thirty.

In [+definite] contexts, the target articles are the definite articles *de* or *het*, and in [-definite] contexts, the indefinite article *een* or the null article are required. The various types of context

can be seen in Table 5.23.

| Context             | Category               | Required article   |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Definite            | [+definite, +specific] | de / het           |
|                     | [+definite, -specific] | de / het           |
| Indefinite          | [-definite, -specific] | een / Ø            |
|                     | [-definite, +specific] | een / Ø            |
| Special article use | Categorial             | een / Ø            |
|                     | Generic                | de / het           |
|                     | Idiomatic              | de / het / een / Ø |

Table 5.23: Types of context in forced-choice elicitation test

We are aware that it is not possible to fully test all categories in such a relatively small number of target items. However, we hope this test will give us a useful insight in the general article use production of FL learners of Dutch focusing on definiteness and specificity.

### 5.3.2 Control group

The control group of native Dutch speakers performed as expected, supplying *de* or *het* in the [+definite] contexts, and *een* or the null article in the [-definite] contexts or in special cases as reported above. Some small deviations occurred when some of the native speakers (< 10%) opted for another article form as expected. However, these deviations were considered an individual variant and were not set as the norm for the learner's interlanguage production.

Only in a few cases, more than 10% of the native speakers interpreted the context differently and, therefore, chose for another article form than predicted. In item 1 (116), the majority opted for the null article, which was expected due to the [-definite, -specific] context.

- (116) *In de supermarkt*  
 Bediende: Kan ik u helpen?  
 Klant: Ja, graag. Ik ben op zoek naar (1) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *appels*.  
*In the supermarket*  
 Clerk: Can I help you?  
 Customer: Yes, please. I'm looking for apples.

However, 28% of the native speakers chose the definite article *de* (see Figure 5.14). We assume they might have seen *appels* (apples) as a generic class of goods the customer wanted

to buy. In some cases, definite NPs in plural might seem to include all members of the group. This meaning closely corresponds with the generic use of articles (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 811, § 14.3.2). Due to the dubiousness of reading of this item, we accepted both forms as correct in the learner's interlanguage production.

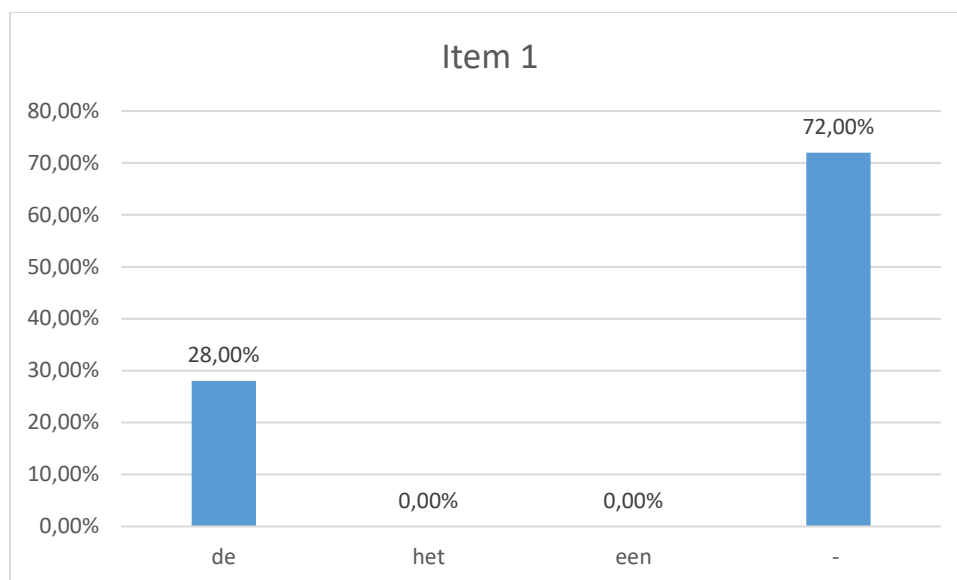


Figure 5.14: Distribution of articles in item 1

Another case in which some native speakers deviated from the expected article form is item 9 and 10 (117).

(117) *In de biologieles*

Leraar: (9) \_\_\_\_ (De / Het / Een / -) *dolfijn* is een zoogdier.

Scholier: Betekent dat dat (10) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / geen / -) *dolfijnen* geen vissen zijn?

Leraar: Precies.

*In the biology class*

Teacher: A dolphin is a mammal.

Student: Does that mean that dolphins are not fish?

Teacher: Exactly.

The majority of the native speakers filled in the expected article *een* since *een dolfijn* (a dolphin) generally refers to the category of dolphins. The remaining 40% of the native speakers opted for the definite article *de*, which is also possible when referring to the whole class (see



Figure 5.15). Both variants were considered correct in the learner's interlanguage production.

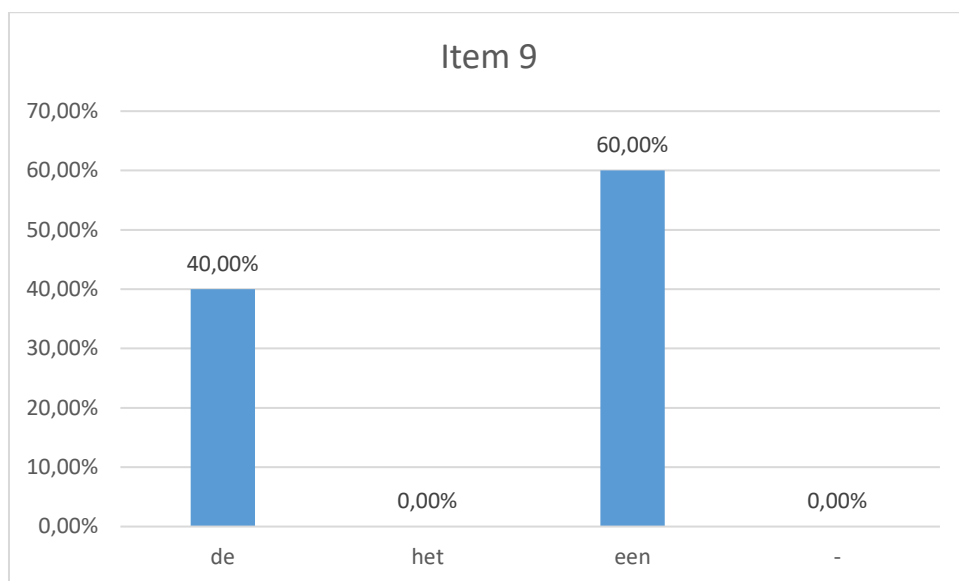


Figure 5.15: Distribution of articles in item 9

In item 10, on the other hand, the vast majority of the native speakers chose the null article as expected, while 12% filled in the definite article *de* (see Figure 5.16). That variant was not expected and cannot be accepted as the norm since it is clear that the plural NP only refers to the abstract category and not to its members (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 811, § 14.3.2).<sup>49</sup> Therefore, this item was excluded from the analysis of the learner's interlanguage production.

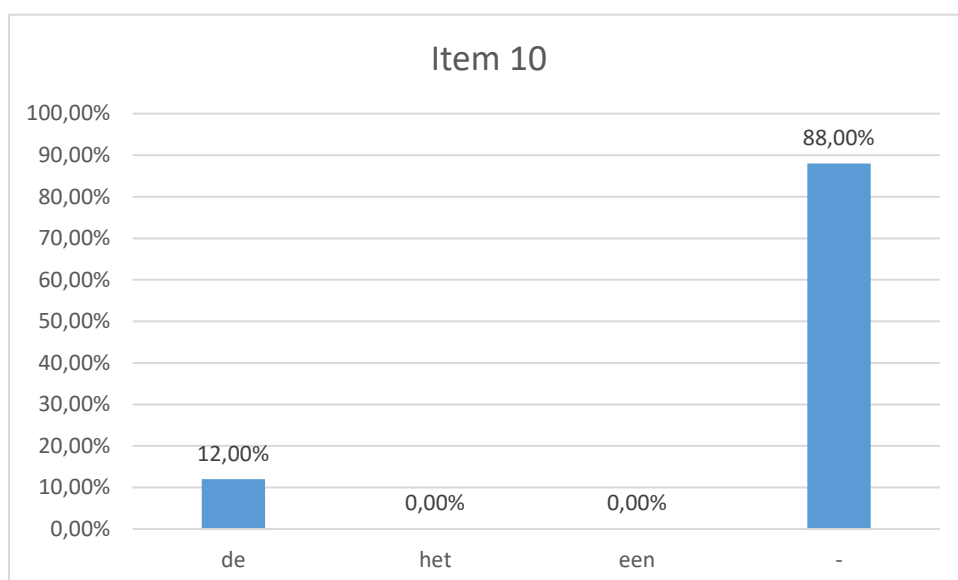


Figure 5.16: Distribution of articles in item 10

<sup>49</sup> However, it is necessary to mention that based on the article use production by the Dutch participants, we might say it is evidently possible to use the definite article *de* in plural when expressing a generic context in informal language use.

The last case to be discussed in more detail is item 11:

- (118) Jollette: In een artikel stond geschreven dat (11) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -)  
*Fransman* dagelijks kaas eet en wijn drinkt.
- Maarten: Wat (12) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *stereotype!*
- Jollette: Dat vind ik ook.
- Jollette: In an article, it was written that the Frenchman eats cheese and drinks wine every day.
- Maarten: What a stereotype!
- Jollette: I think so too.

As *de Fransman* (the Frenchman) refers to all French people together as a species, use of the definite article *de* was expected. However, 48% of the native speakers opted for the indefinite article *een*:

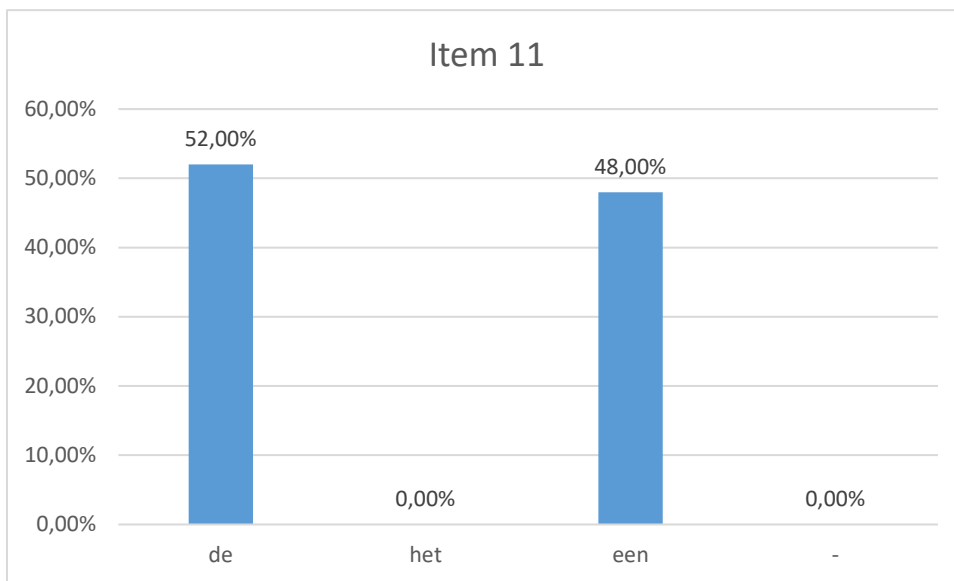


Figure 5.17: Distribution of articles in item 11

When using an indefinite article, the meaning of the sentence is different. It means that an individual Frenchman eats cheese and drinks wine every day, not the whole species. We might object that the context following this sentence logically refers a general stereotype concerning the whole group. Nevertheless, we accepted both variants as correct since both readings are possible.

### 5.3.3 Participants

In order to analyse the results of the forced-choice elicitation test, the total number of errors is presented first. Second, the errors per group are discussed and compared. Finally, various types of learner's errors are analysed.

#### 5.3.3.1 General findings

In total, 31 items were tested, since we excluded item 10 due to incorrect generic use of articles in plural by the native speakers as discussed earlier (see Chapter 5.3.2). The results show that 80.99% of the tested article forms were used correctly, whereas in 19.01% of the cases, an incorrect article was filled in. In Table 5.24, correct and incorrect distribution of articles in the forced-choice elicitation test is to be seen together with the calculated Confidence intervals.

|                | <b>Correct use</b> | <b>Incorrect use</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> | <b>Confidence level (95%)</b> | <b>Confidence interval</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b> | 78.76%             | 21.24%               | 0.7876      | 0.0680                    | 0.0432                        | 0.74 < <i>p</i> > 0.83     |
| <b>Group 2</b> | 79.47%             | 20.53%               | 0.7947      | 0.1063                    | 0.0714                        | 0.72 < <i>p</i> > 0.87     |
| <b>Group 3</b> | 85.48%             | 14.52%               | 0.8548      | 0.0831                    | 0.0528                        | 0.80 < <i>p</i> > 0.91     |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>80.99%</b>      | <b>19.01%</b>        |             |                           |                               |                            |

Table 5.24: Correct and incorrect distribution of articles in forced-choice elicitation test

Figure 5.18 demonstrates a slightly increasing trend that can be observed between the groups. The higher the Dutch language proficiency level, the better article use and the fewer errors made.

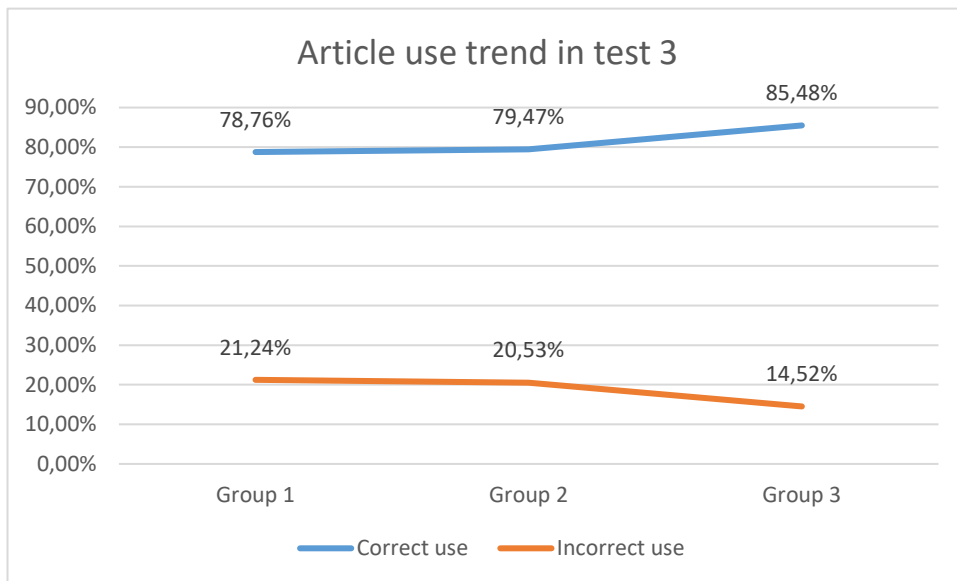


Figure 5.18: Article use trend across the groups in forced-choice elicitation test

Nevertheless, after having carried out an ANOVA test, it is clear that the differences across the groups are not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). In Table 5.25, calculated values of correct article use are shown describing the results from the forced-choice elicitation test.

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.0324    | 2         | 0.0162    | 2.1617   | .1316          | 3.2945        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 0.2398    | 32        | 0.0075    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 0.2722    | 34        |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.25: ANOVA test of correct article use across groups in forced-choice elicitation test

In the total amount of errors, we examined also the earlier defined five categories. In Table 5.26, a detailed overview can be found of the error distribution per category.

| <b>Category</b>         | <b>Correct use</b> | <b>Incor-rect use</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> | <b>Confidence level (95%)</b> | <b>Confidence interval</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| [+definite, +specific]  | 94.95%             | 4.70%                 | 0.9495      | 0.1301                    | 0.0549                        | 0.89 < $p$ > 1.00          |
| [+definite, -specific]  | 98.61%             | 1.39%                 | 0.9861      | 0.0340                    | 0.0357                        | 0.95 < $p$ > 1.02          |
| [-definite, -specific]  | 79.36%             | 20.64%                | 0.7936      | 0.2523                    | 0.1065                        | 0.69 < $p$ > 0.90          |
| [-definite, +specific]  | 90.40%             | 10.61%                | 0.9040      | 0.1171                    | 0.0582                        | 0.85 < $p$ > 0.96          |
| Special use of articles | 59.92%             | 40.08%                | 0.5992      | 0.3196                    | 0.1455                        | 0.45 < $p$ > 0.74          |
| <b>Average</b>          | <b>84.65%</b>      | <b>15.48%</b>         |             |                           |                               |                            |

Table 5.26: Distribution of errors per category

The results show that the examined article use per category is comparable between the groups. Although we had expected the higher Dutch language proficiency levels to achieve generally better results, there are no significant differences across the three groups (see Figure 5.19).

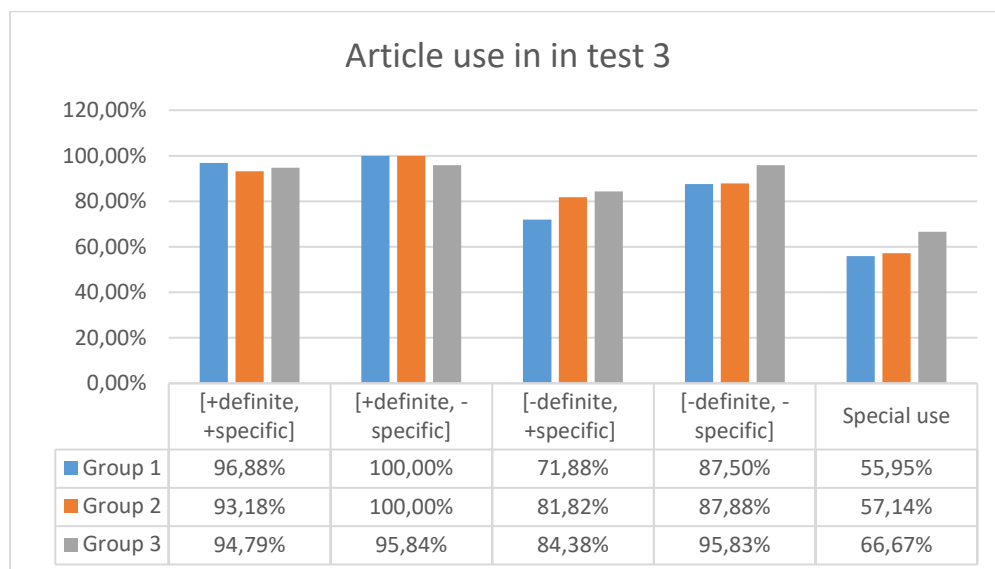


Figure 5.19: Correct article use in forced-choice elicitation test per category and group

When focusing on definiteness and specificity, no significant fluctuation in [+definite, -specific] and [-definite, +specific] contexts was observed (cf. Ionin et al. 2004, 2008, 2009; Baslerová 2016). Generally, it is important to point out that errors were primarily made in [-definite] contexts. While an error was on average made in 15.40% of the [-definite] contexts, only 3.22% of the [+definite] contexts were incorrectly filled in. Above that, Group 3 scored much higher in [-definite] context than the other groups (see Figure 5.20). Surprisingly, the success percentage of Group 3 in [+definite] contexts is the lowest from all the groups. However, the differences are marginal.

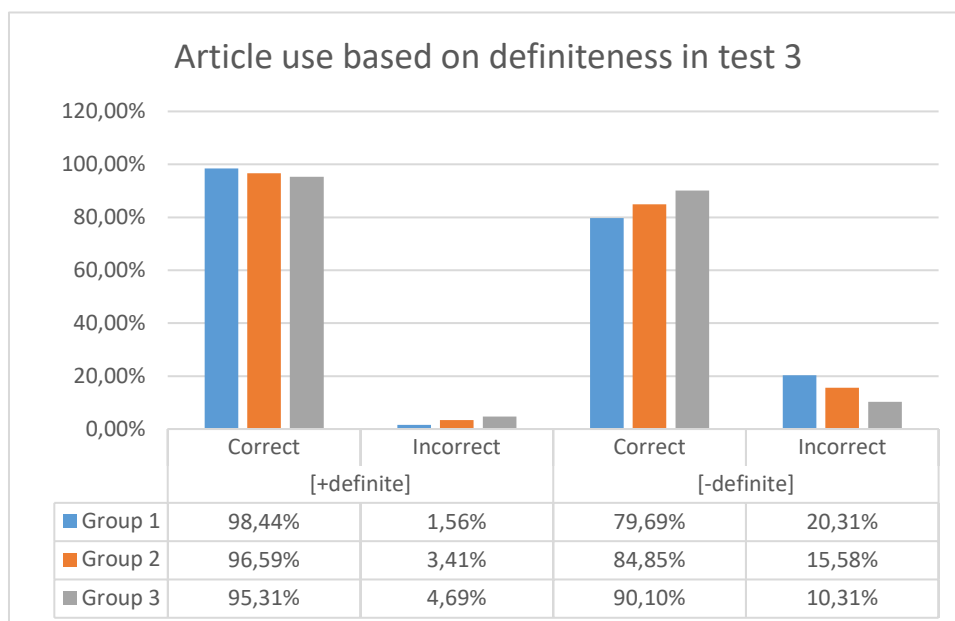


Figure 5.20: Article use based on definiteness in forced-choice elicitation test

Referring to the divergent success percentages in [+definite] and [-definite] contexts, an ANOVA test was carried based on which we consider the [-definite] context a significant variable ( $p < .05$ ) causing errors in article use in Dutch by Czech FL learners:

| <i>Source of Variation</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p-value</i> | <i>F crit</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Between Groups</b>      | 0.2351    | 1         | 0.2351    | 7.4009   | .0082          | 3.9778        |
| <b>Within Groups</b>       | 2.2237    | 70        | 0.0318    |          |                |               |
| <b>Total</b>               | 2.4588    | 71        |           |          |                |               |

Table 5.27: ANOVA test of correct article use across groups in [ $\pm$ definite] contexts in forced choice elicitation test

After having looked into the general findings about the article use in the forced-choice elicitation test, it is clear that both omission and substitution errors occurred in the elicited data. As predicted, the omission rate was much lower in the forced-choice elicitation test than in the other tests. We assume that this might have been caused by the higher attention drawn to the article use. Articles were on average omitted only in 20.73% of all errors in this test. The most errors were made based on definiteness. In Table 5.28, an overview of the made errors is given.

|                      | Total<br>no. of<br>errors | Omission<br>(%) | Substitution (%) |               |               |              |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
|                      |                           |                 | Definiteness     | Gender        | Countability  | Number       |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 40                        | 17.50%          | 52.50%           | 5.00%         | 22.50%        | 2.50%        |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 32                        | 21.62%          | 40.54%           | 18.92%        | 18.92%        | 0.00%        |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 26                        | 23.08%          | 34.62%           | 11.54%        | 30.77%        | 0.00%        |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>98</b>                 | <b>20.73%</b>   | <b>42.55%</b>    | <b>11.58%</b> | <b>24.06%</b> | <b>0.83%</b> |

Table 5.28: Distribution of errors in forced-choice elicitation test

Due to the fact that articles were both omitted and substituted in the cases of special use, we analysed them separately. Table 5.29 shows correct and incorrect use of articles in the different types of article use across the groups. Based on the data, we can see that there is no question of an unequivocal trend across the groups. While in categorial and generic article use, Group 1 scored the highest, in idiomatic and negative use, Group 2 and Group 3 achieved better results. Nevertheless, this overview is only informative since the number of the tested items was too small in order to be considered representative. At the same time, it might give us an interesting insight into the whole picture of article interlanguage production in Dutch. Various concrete cases will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

|                | Categorial    |               | Generic       |               | Idiomatic     |               | Negative      |              |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
|                | Correct       | Incorrect     | Correct       | Incorrect     | Correct       | Incorrect     | Correct       | Incorrect    |
| <b>Group 1</b> | 75.00%        | 25.00%        | 75.00%        | 25.00%        | 41.67%        | 58.33%        | 75.00%        | 25.00%       |
| <b>Group 2</b> | 45.45%        | 54.55%        | 72.72%        | 27.28%        | 45.00%        | 55.00%        | 100.00%       | 0.00%        |
| <b>Group 3</b> | 41.67         | 58.33%        | 66.67%        | 33.33%        | 65.00%        | 35.00%        | 100.00%       | 0.00%        |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>54.04%</b> | <b>45.96%</b> | <b>71.46%</b> | <b>28.54%</b> | <b>50.56%</b> | <b>49.44%</b> | <b>91.67%</b> | <b>8.33%</b> |

Table 5.29: Correct and incorrect article use in special article use in forced-choice elicitation test

### 5.3.3.2 Omission errors

In order to discuss the omission errors in the forced-choice elicitation test, an overview of omission errors in [ $\pm$ definite] contexts was prepared (see Table 5.30).

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles |             | Total omission (%)<br>[±definite] | Omission (%)                   |                           |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                      | [+definite]                    | [-definite] |                                   | <i>de / het</i><br>[+definite] | <i>een</i><br>[-definite] |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 136                            | 132         | 2.61%                             | 0.74%                          | 4.55%                     |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 125                            | 121         | 3.25%                             | 0.80%                          | 5.79%                     |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 135                            | 132         | 2.25%                             | 0.74%                          | 3.79%                     |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>396</b>                     | <b>385</b>  | <b>2.70%</b>                      | <b>0.76%</b>                   | <b>4.71%</b>              |

Table 5.30: Distribution of omission errors in [±definite] contexts in forced-choice elicitation test

From the results, it is clear that the omission rate was generally very low in the forced-choice elicitation test. On average, only 2.70% of the articles were omitted. Furthermore, the omission errors more frequently occurred in [-definite] contexts (see Figure 5.21). We assume that the low omission rate might have been caused by the fact that the participants were primarily focused on article use and were therefore tended to use articles based on their metalinguistic knowledge. The elicited data indicate that the participants are fully aware of the fact that Dutch nouns are preceded by articles in general.

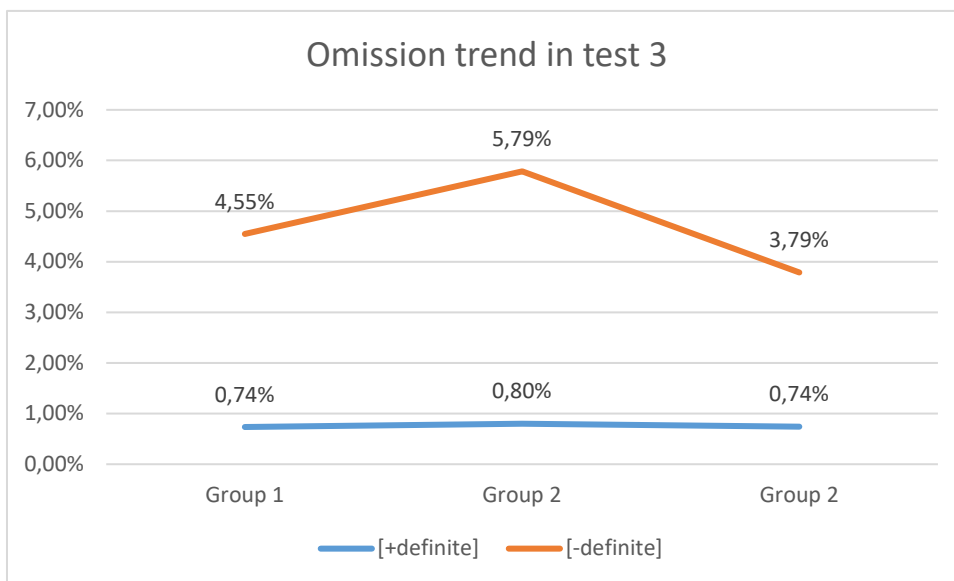


Figure 5.21: Omission trend in forced-choice elicitation test

To give an example of an omission error, we can see that the majority of the participants opted for the correct indefinite article in item 23 (119), whereas 5.71% of the participants chose for the definite article *het* and 22.86% omitted the article (see Figure 5.22).



- (119) Layla: Ik hoop dat je (23) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *fijn weekend* hebt gehad.
- Clara: Ja hoor, we hebben (24) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *hoofdstad van Denemarken* bezocht.
- Layla: I hope you had a nice weekend.
- Clara: Sure, we visited the capital of Denmark.

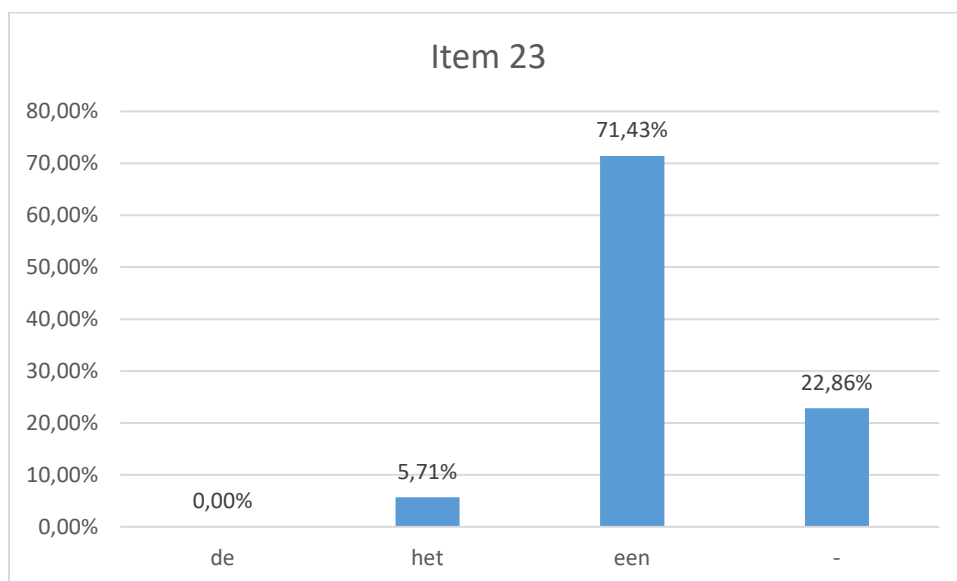


Figure 5.22: Distribution of articles in item 23

### 5.3.3.3 Substitution errors

Compared to the omission errors, substitution errors more often occurred in this test. We frequently observed substitution based on definiteness and gender.

The distribution of substitution errors based on definiteness is presented in Table 5.31. On average, 5.37% of the articles were substituted, which is lower than expected. Above that, we can see a slightly decreasing trend in the substitution rate across the groups (see Figure 5.23). From the results, it is obvious that the participants scored much higher in the general article use tested in the forced-choice elicitation test than in the other two tests. However, the overall success percentage of this test is lower due to the problematic special use of articles.

|                      | Total no. of NPs with articles or Ø |             | Total substitution (%) | Substitution (%)              |                                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                      | [+definite]                         | [-definite] |                        | <i>de / het</i> by <i>een</i> | <i>een / Ø</i> by <i>de / het</i> |
|                      | [+definite]                         | [-definite] | [±definite]            | [+definite]                   | [-definite]                       |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 136                                 | 152         | 7.29%                  | 1.47%                         | 12.50%                            |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 125                                 | 139         | 5.68%                  | 4.00%                         | 7.19%                             |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 135                                 | 153         | 3.13%                  | 4.44%                         | 1.96%                             |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>396</b>                          | <b>444</b>  | <b>5.37%</b>           | <b>3.31%</b>                  | <b>7.22%</b>                      |

Table 5.31: Distribution of substitution errors based on definiteness in forced-choice elicitation test

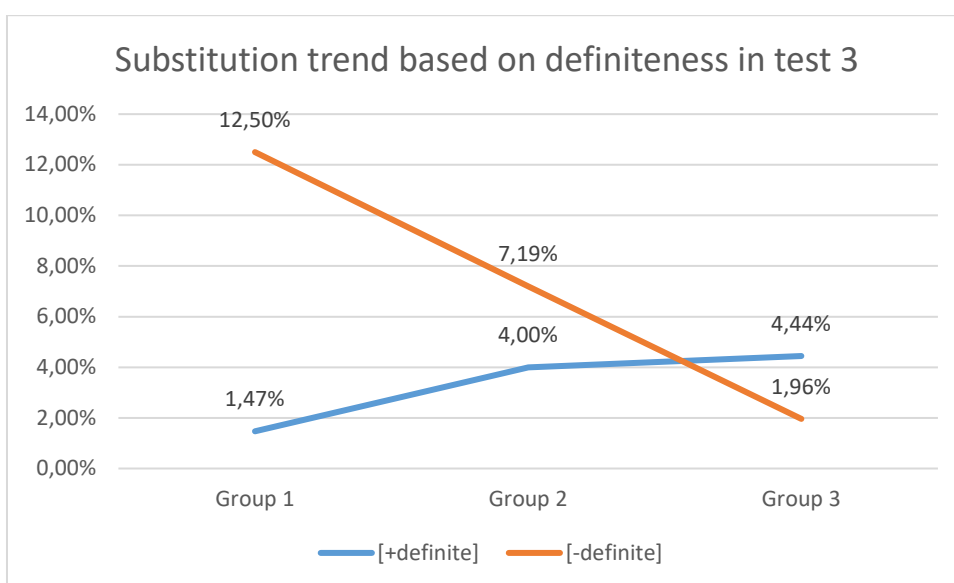


Figure 5.23: Substitution trend based on definiteness in forced-choice elicitation test

As far as the possible reasons for definiteness errors are concerned, we saw that specificity defined by general knowledge from the context affected the article used by the participants. In item 20 (120), 17.14% of the participants opted for the definite article *de*, although the referent is newly introduced into the discourse. Above that, 2.86% of the participants fully omitted the article (see Figure 5.24).

(120) *Op het vliegveld*

Elaine: Sorry, mag ik u iets vragen?

Beveiligingsagent: Jazeker, hoe kan ik u helpen?

Elaine: Ik probeer (20) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *kleine blonde vrouw* te vinden. Zij is met vlucht 158 aangekomen. Heeft

u haar misschien gezien?

*At the airport*

Elaine: Sorry, may I ask you something?

Security guard: Sure, how can I help you?

Elaine: I'm trying to find a little blond woman. She arrived on flight 158. Have you seen her?

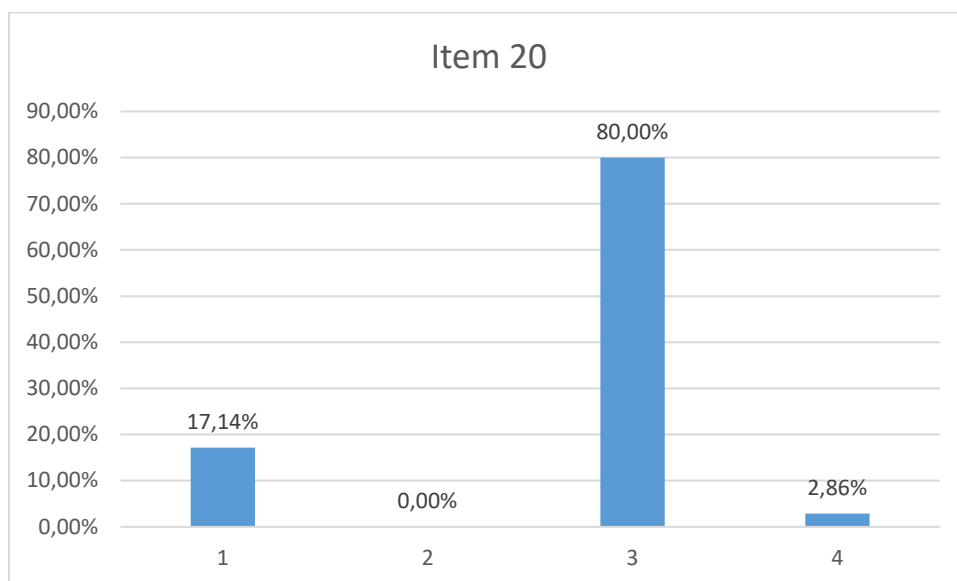


Figure 5.24: Distribution of articles in item 20

Finally, substitution occurred also in [gender] condition. Substitution errors based on gender were distributed as follows:

|                      | Total no. of NPs in [singular][+definite] |            | Total substitution (%) | Substitution (%)        |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                      | [-neuter]                                 | [+neuter]  |                        | <i>de</i> by <i>het</i> | <i>het</i> by <i>de</i> |
|                      | [-neuter]                                 | [+neuter]  | [\pmneuter]            | [-neuter]               | [+neuter]               |
| <b>Group 1</b>       | 84                                        | 36         | 1.67%                  | 2.38%                   | 0.00%                   |
| <b>Group 2</b>       | 77                                        | 33         | 6.36%                  | 6.49%                   | 6.06%                   |
| <b>Group 3</b>       | 84                                        | 36         | 2.50%                  | 2.38%                   | 2.78%                   |
| <b>Total/Average</b> | <b>245</b>                                | <b>105</b> | <b>3.75%</b>           | <b>2.95%</b>            | <b>3.51%</b>            |

Table 5.32: Distribution of substitution errors based on gender in forced-choice elicitation test

The overall substitution rate based on this condition was also very low. Following the same trend as observed in the previous tests, there are no significant differences between [-neuter]

and [+neuter] contexts. Surprisingly, Group 1 achieved the highest success percentage from all the groups (see Figure 5.25).

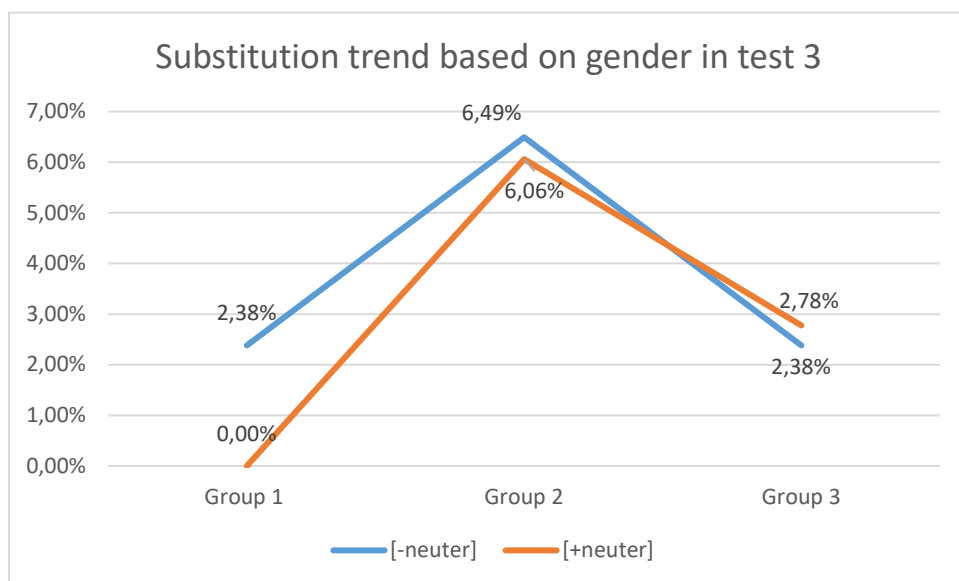


Figure 5.25: Substitution trend based on gender in forced-choice elicitation test

To demonstrate a concrete substitution error, item 3 (121) is presented. The majority of the participants chose the correct article form *de*, while 8.57% opted for *het* (see Figure 5.26).

- (121) Marjan: Wat heb je gistermiddag gedaan?  
 Esther: Ik ben in een kledingwinkel geweest en heb (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (de / het / een / -) *jas* gekocht. Ik hoop dat jij (3) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (de / het / een / -) *jas* ook leuk vindt.  
 Marjan: What did you do yesterday in the afternoon?  
 Esther: I went to a clothing store and bought a jacket. I hope you like  
 the jacket too.

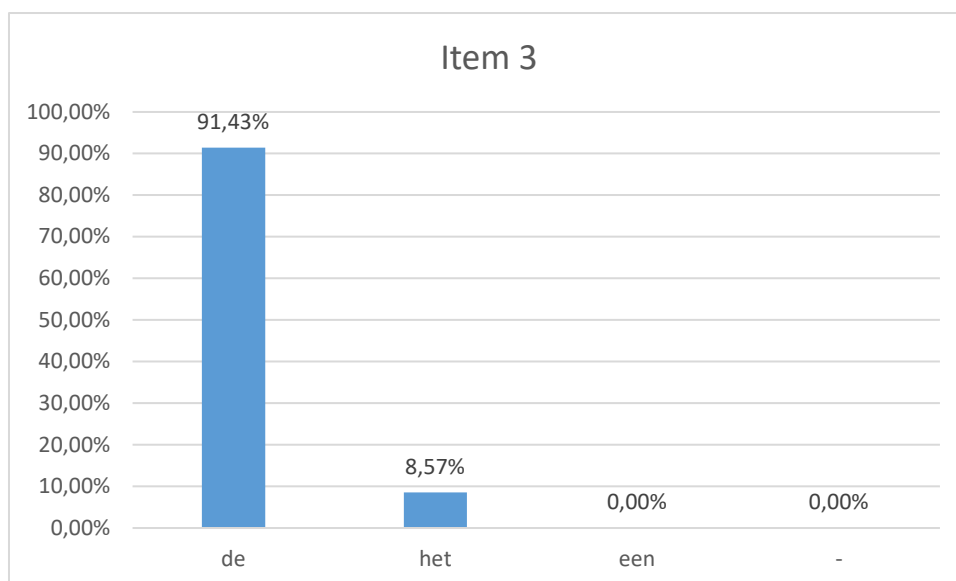


Figure 5.26: Distribution of articles in item 3

We might say that *de jas* (coat) is not that transparent as the diminutive *het broodje* (sandwich) since it does not have any suffix, which would be directly related to [+neuter] condition. Therefore, it is not surprising that all participants chose for the correct article *het* in item 32 (122),

- (122) Chris: Ik heb (30) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -) *soep* en (31) \_\_\_\_  
(de / het / een / -) *broodje* voor je besteld.
- Roderick: Dank je wel. (32) \_\_\_\_ (De / Het / Een / -) *broodje* ziet er echt lekker uit.
- Chris: I have ordered soup and a sandwich for you.
- Roderick: Thank you. The sandwich looks really nice.

Besides that, a frequent substitution error could be observed in [-count] condition. In item 30 (122), only 31.43% of the participants opted for the correct null article. The majority of the participants chose the indefinite article *een* (see Figure 5.27). We assume that this article choice might have been affected by L1 transfer since *polévka* (soup) is countable in Czech. In Dutch, the correct countable expression would be e.g. *een kom soep* (a bowl of soup).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> It has to be mentioned that the indefinite article *a* in combination with *soep* (soup) is sometimes used in the everyday language by Dutch native speakers as well. However, this option was considered as incorrect in this research since soup is not countable in Dutch and only two control participants (< 10%) chose for the indefinite article.

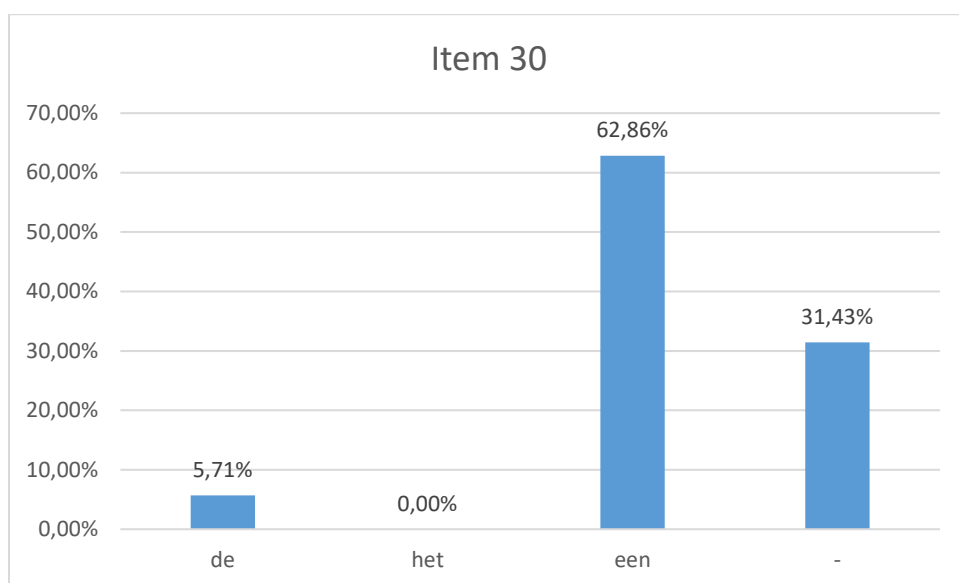


Figure 5.27: Distribution of articles in item 30

Finally, we looked also into the various article use presented by categorial, generic and idiomatic article use. Although the number of tested items is not representative enough for generalisations regarding article use in these categories, the results show that the participants experienced big difficulties with the specific article use. We would like to point out the errors in the expression *naar kantoor gaan* (to go to the office), which is a frequently used word phrase in Dutch. In item 15 (123), only 28.57% of the participants chose for the null article, while 54.29% opted for the definite article *het* and 17.14% filled in the definite article *de* which is not correct according to [+neuter] condition (see Figure 5.28).<sup>51</sup>

(123) *Op het werk*

Priscilla: Blijf je morgen thuiswerken?

Sacha: Nee, morgen ga ik naar (15) \_\_\_\_ (de / het / een / -  
*kantoor*).

*At work*

Priscilla: Are you going to work from home tomorrow?

Sacha: No, tomorrow I'm going to the office.

<sup>51</sup> Considering the fact that most of the participants have probably never worked in a Dutch speaking environment, it is not surprising that their explicit knowledge of this expression was low.

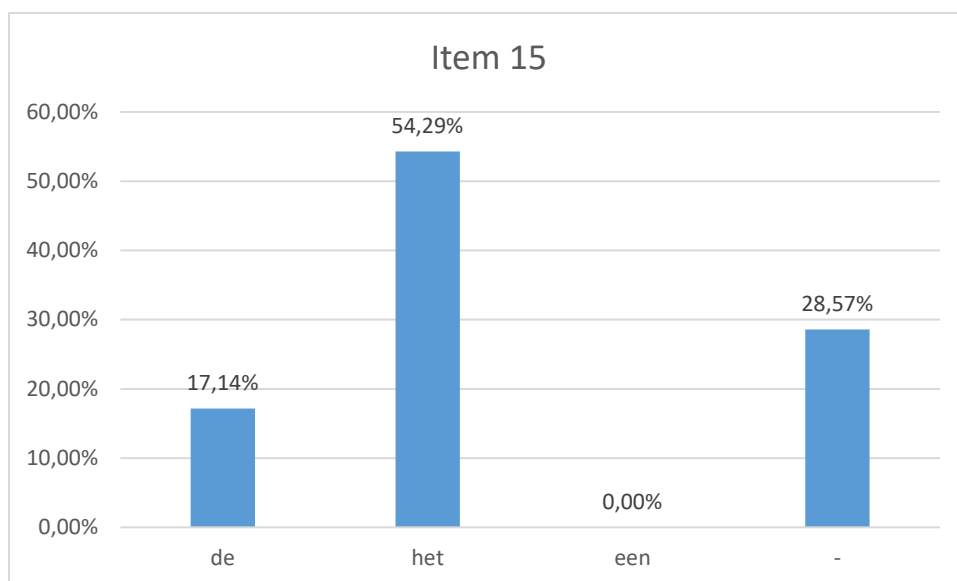


Figure 5.28: Distribution in item 15

Haeseryn et al. (1997: 199, § 4.5.3) claims that the fixed expression *naar kantoor gaan* (to go to the office) is generally used when an office clerk goes to the office. However, use of the definite article *het* is not fully ruled out. *Naar het kantoor gaan* (to go to the office) might be used by a worker who works in a warehouse, but has temporarily moved to a certain office. Nevertheless, this option would not be logical in item 15. Above that, 94% of the native speakers opted for the null article, which was considered the norm in the learner's interlanguage production.

#### 5.4 Findings of task-related variability

In this paragraph, the above-presented results are shortly reviewed from the perspective of task-related variability. Since three different data elicitation methods were used within this study, it is important to look into the possible impact the tasks might have had on the final results.

In order to present the possible variability between the tests, Figure 5.29 was prepared. From the results, it is clear that the success percentage is relatively stable across the three tasks. As far as Group 1 is concerned, no deviations are visible at all as the participants scored approximately 78% of correct article use in all of the tests. We argue that Group 1 achieved the best result of all tests in the forced-choice elicitation test thanks to the fact that this test drew the most attention to the form and the learner's explicit knowledge was tested. With regard to Group 2 and Group 3, a slightly negative trend can be observed appearing from the free text writing test to the forced-choice elicitation test. We assume that these two groups were more

successful in the free text writing test and the translation test than in the forced-choice elicitation test thanks to their implicit knowledge of Dutch and the possibility to avoid unknown language structures by using already acquired language features. In the forced-choice elicitation test, no avoidance methods could be applied wherefore explicit knowledge was tested. Above that, the results show that the lower success percentage in the forced-choice elicitation test was primarily caused by the cases of special use of articles, whereas the omission rate in this test was considerably lower than in the other two tests.

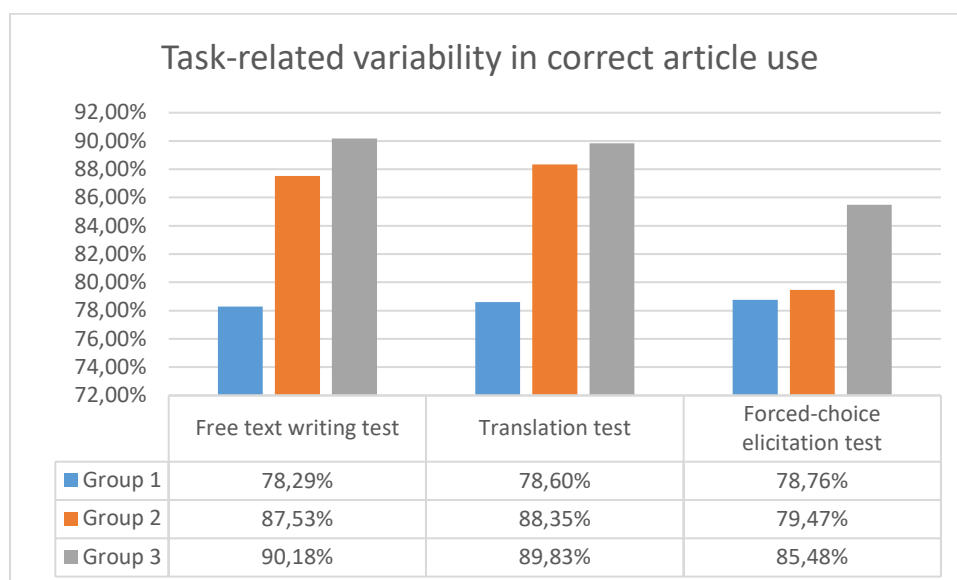


Figure 5.29: Task-related variability in correct article use across groups

To sum up, different tasks do not only present different attention to form, but also different type of knowledge tested in the interlanguage production. As also concluded by Trenkić (2000: 285), learners will, naturally, perform more successfully on tasks which test the type of knowledge they possess.



## 6 Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the results and findings presented in the previous chapter in order to be able to draw conclusions about the patterns of article use of Czech learners in FL Dutch.

### 6.1 Summary of findings

#### 6.1.1 General findings

To summarise the above-described results, we first present the overall success percentage of article use based on the three tests across the groups in Figure 6.1.

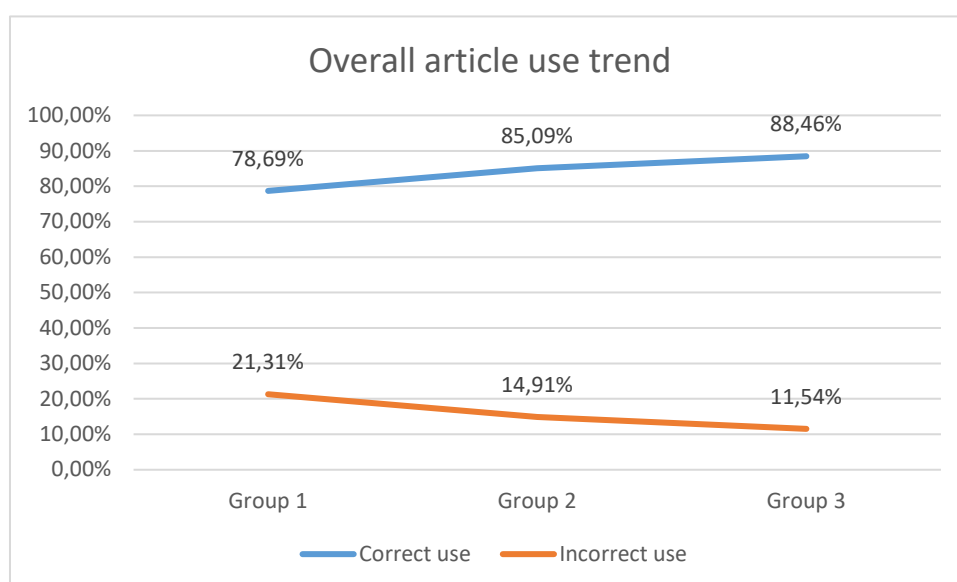


Figure 6.1: Overall correct article use across groups

Our findings indicate that the success percentage increases as the expected language proficiency level improves. The expected language proficiency of the respondents of this study is based on the amount of exposure to Dutch language acquisition, primarily to explicit instructions during university studies of Dutch. We can see that there is a distinct positive trend in the correct article use since Group 1 (Beginners) on average used a correct article in 78.69% of the cases, Group 2 (Intermediate) in 85.09% and Group 3 (Advanced) in 88.46%. This corresponds with the results of Baslerová (2016), but contradicts the findings of Ungermannová (2015).

We tested our findings based on a single factor ANOVA test, which confirmed that the error reduction in the overall article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch was

statistically significant ( $p = .0009$ ) at the higher language proficiency levels. Therefore, our hypothesis H1 predicting an increasing trend in correct article use based on increasing language proficiency level was confirmed. This corresponds also with the earlier research confirming the positive role of the amount of exposure to language acquisition (Franceschina 2001; Sabourin et al. 2006).

As far as H2 is concerned, the results showed that a persistent variability might be observed in the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch. In Figure 6.2, the differences across the groups and tests are shown. We can see that an increasing trend is evident across the groups, but that the native-like competence has not been achieved.

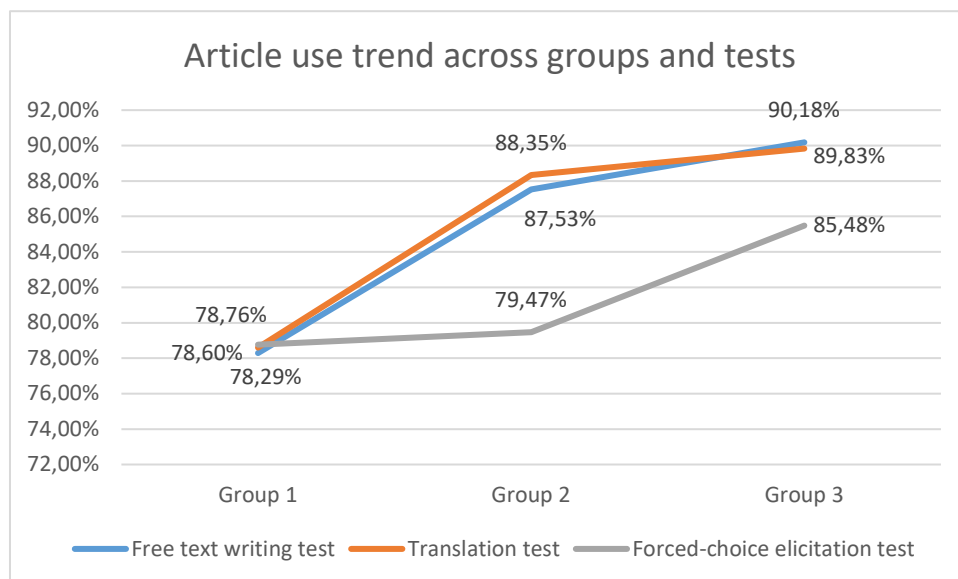


Figure 6.2: Success percentage in article use across groups and tests

Even after five and more years of exposure to explicit instructions of Dutch language acquisition, the participants of the advanced Group 3 still made errors in article use. On average, this group scored 88.50%. This confirms our predictions about the persistent variability in the article interlanguage production and might provide us with some evidence for the expected process of fossilisation (Selinker 1972, 1992; Littlewood 2006; Pimingsdorfer 2010).

Furthermore, we doubt that adult Czech learners of FL Dutch have full access to UG since they were not (yet) able to perform at the native-like level (cf. Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996; Prévost & White 2000; White 2003b).

With regard to H3, we conclude that a negative semantic transfer from L1 with respect to

the use of functional categories plays an important role in the article interlanguage of Czech learners in FL Dutch. Based on the frequently observed omission rate and the earlier presented examples from the elicited data (see Chapter 5.1.2), we argue that this was caused by the fact that Czech encodes definiteness by lexicon-based strategies rather than by a functional category (Ullman 2001; Trenkić 2002, 2004).

Above that, negative semantic transfer from L1 was observed in the distribution of definite articles in [gender] condition. The results showed that the more semantically transparent the gender distinction was (e.g. suffix *-tje* for diminutives), the better the performance of the FL learners in that context (Trenkić 2009; Pimingsdorfer 2010).

### 6.1.2 Omission patterns

In the Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis, omission errors were predicted in the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch. This empirical cross-sectional study confirmed that the most errors were indeed caused by omission, which corresponds with our assumptions presented in H4. Figure 6.3 demonstrates the omission rate across the groups and tests. It is obvious that the average omission rate mainly decreased as the language proficiency level increased.

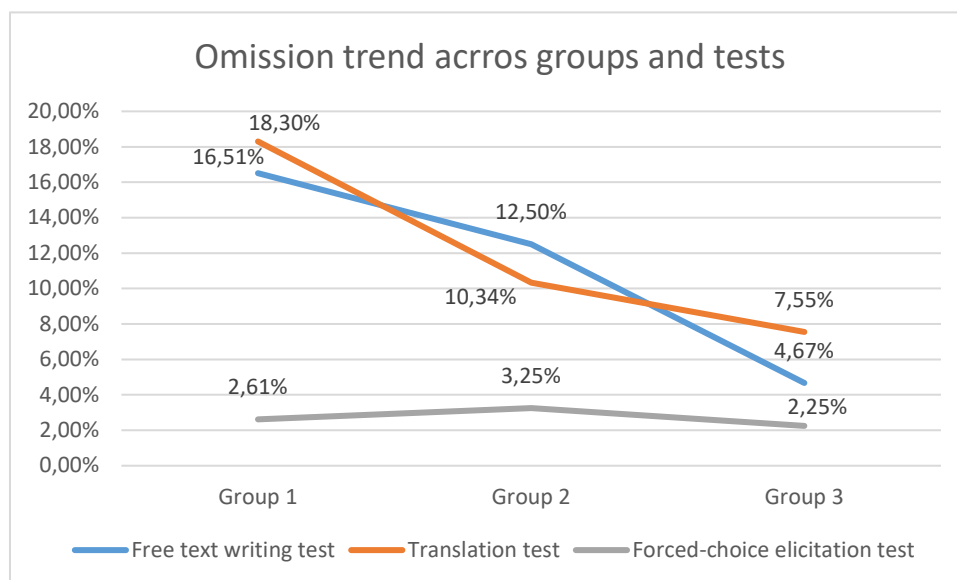


Figure 6.3: Overall omission trend across groups and tests

Furthermore, the most omissions were generally made in [-definite] contexts as predicted in the Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis (see Figure 6.4). We therefore might argue that FL learners tend to omit articles when introducing a new referent. However, the difference is rather

marginal since the average omission rate of all the groups was 10.22% in [-definite] contexts compared to 7.50% in [+definite] contexts. In order to statistically check this difference, a single factor ANOVA test was carried out that indicated that the difference was indeed insignificant ( $p = .4024$ ).

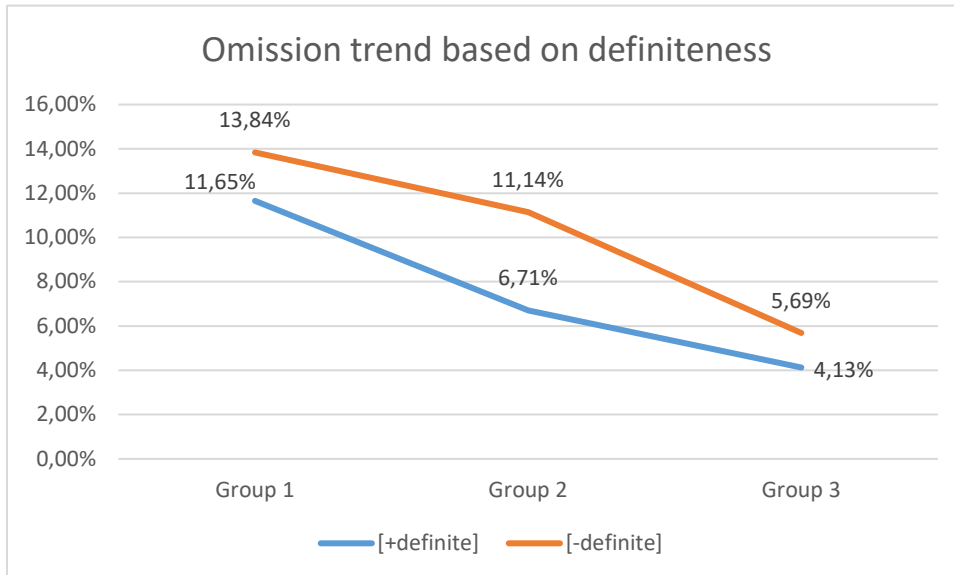


Figure 6.4: Overall omission trend based on definiteness

In contrary to Trenkić (2000, 2009), omission in second and further mentions of a referent did not occur in the elicited data. This contradicts also the principle of the Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis, since articles in such references might be considered redundant by the learners as the referents are identifiable from the discourse. On the other hand, we might argue that Czech learners of FL Dutch might be affected by the potential grammaticalization of the demonstrative pronoun *ten* into a definite article in Czech (cf. Dobiáš 2016; Konvička 2017; Zíková 2017). This might encourage the learners to correctly use definite articles in FL Dutch (cf. Pimingsdorfer 2010;).

To define another omission pattern, we observed a high omission rate in adjectivally modified contexts, which corresponds with the results of Trenkić (2000, 2007, 2008, 2009). Above that, the omission rate was even higher when the adjectives were combined with intensifiers and/or when they preceded an abstract nominal.

Although we might argue that many omission errors are caused by negative transfer from L1 since Czech does not use any overt carrier of grammatical definiteness, the results indicate that this is not the only reason for article interlanguage production errors.

### 6.1.3 Substitution patterns

As far as substitution errors are concerned, the results showed that the interlanguage production of articles by the Czech learners in FL Dutch was not primarily characterized by overuse of definite articles in [-definite][+specific] contexts and overuse of indefinite article in [+definite][-specific], which supports our assumptions in H5. We observed that [-definite] condition was generally a stumbling block in the article interlanguage production regardless of [ $\pm$ specific] condition. Figure 6.5 demonstrates how the participants, especially at lower language proficiency level, substituted the indefinite article *een* or the null article by the definite articles *de* or *het*. In many cases, a new referent needed to be introduced into the discourse, but the participants opted for a definite article while focusing on the explicitly stated knowledge from the context. Therefore, we argue that the participants do not fluctuate between the semantic universals definiteness and specificity (cf. Ionin et al. 2004, 2008, 2009; Snape 2006), but that they are affected by explicitly stated knowledge from the context and unique identifiability of nominals.

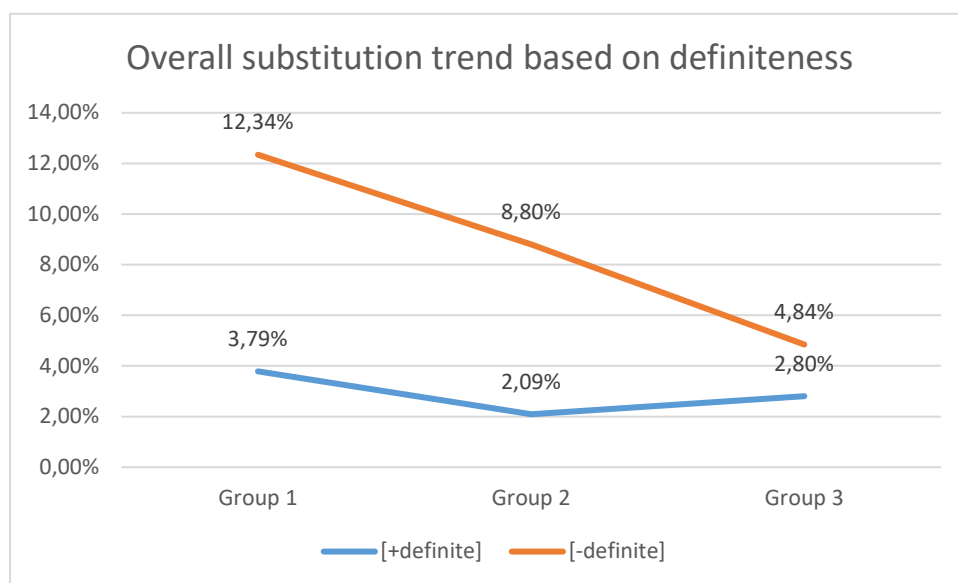


Figure 6.5: Overall substitution trend based on definiteness

Finally, our hypothesis H6 regarding overgeneralisation of the definite article *de*, when *het* is required, was not fully confirmed. Although the most substitution errors based on gender occurred in [+neuter] condition, the differences were not statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Only Group 1 was more likely to substitute *het* by *de* (cf. Selinker 1972, 1992; Littlewood 2006). We might conclude that the beginners relied on their declarative/lexical knowledge which needs to

be exposed to more language acquisition input, while the more advanced groups were fully aware of the [+neuter] condition in Dutch which eventually resulted in overuse of the definite article *het*.

Since no distinct overuse of *de* was observed in [+neuter] condition, the impact of English gender distinction on the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch cannot be confirmed. In Figure 6.6, the overall substitution trend based on gender across the groups is shown.

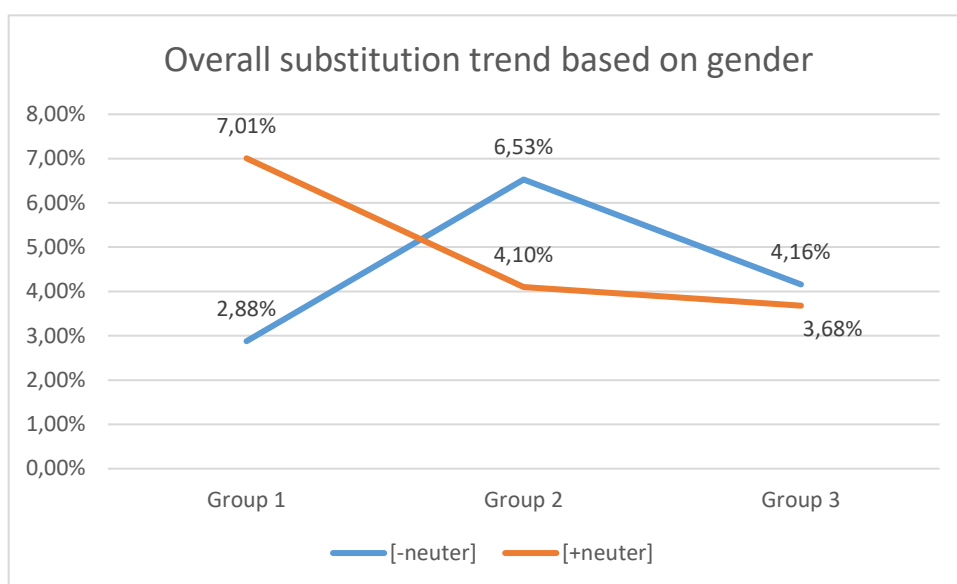


Figure 6.6: Overall substitution trend based on gender

## 6.2 Implications of this study for teaching of articles

An important question still remains unanswered: How can we make article use acquisition in Dutch by Czech learners easier and more successful?

First of all, it is necessary to realize that FL Czech learners will probably not be able to develop a full native-like competence in article use in Dutch. The results of this study indicate that even after five and more years of explicit instructions, the FL learners showed a persistent variability in their article interlanguage production in Dutch. In general, we assume that FL learners are aware of the fact that Dutch nominals are preceded by articles, but they struggle to fully understand the grammatical functions and the semantics and pragmatics of the Dutch articles.

From the results of this study, it is evident that the proficiency in article use increases as the general language proficiency gets higher. We therefore assume that increased exposure to Dutch in general and explicit instructions regarding the grammatical rules of article use in particular

might improve the article use in the FL learner's interlanguage production. Furthermore, we argue that also more explicit instructions regarding semantic/pragmatic (in)definiteness might help acquiring article use in Dutch. It is important to draw the learner's attention to the functions of article in Dutch. Above that, we recommend to focus on the distribution of articles with pre-modified nouns, abstract nouns and the special use of articles such as categorial, generic and idiomatic use.

### **6.3 Limitations of this study**

The findings of this study should be seen in light of its limitations, which are primarily related to the data elicitation methods used. Since in the scope of this study written data were elicited only, we would suggest to examine spontaneous oral utterances of Czech learners of FL Dutch in order to obtain a wider picture of their article interlanguage production in Dutch. Furthermore, the Dutch language proficiency should be tested explicitly in the frame of the data elicitation to make sure the Dutch language proficiency of all respondents is directly comparable. Finally, a larger text corpus without any particular attention to [+neuter] noun in the task instructions should be elicited or a forced-choice elicitation test mainly focusing on gender should be carried out in order to be able to test article use in [gender] condition in a more representative way.

### **6.4 Suggestions for further research**

Besides the above-mentioned suggestions for further research regarding the identified limitations, many additional interesting questions and topics came up for discussion while carrying out this research. Based on that, we would suggest to investigate the impact of intensifiers on article use in *Art + INT + Adj + N* contexts and article use in *Art + Adj + Adj + N* contexts in order to test whether articles are more frequently omitted in these contexts. Furthermore, the precise impact of explicit instructions regarding semantic and pragmatic rules of article use on article use acquisition should be looked into more closely. Finally, articles preceding abstract nouns seemed more likely to be omitted. Therefore, the role of abstractness of nouns on article use should be explored more deeply.

## 7 Conclusion

In this thesis, we examined patterns of interlanguage production of articles by Czech learners in FL Dutch. In the scope of the theoretical part, the current literature body focusing on L2/FL acquisition and article use acquisition was presented and discussed. As a result of that, we presumed an essential role of language transfer in L2/FL acquisition of articles (Van de Craats 2000; Hiligsmann et al. 2008; Pimingsdorfer 2010; Ziemann et al. 2011; Schepens 2015). Furthermore, we expected that interlanguage processes like overgeneralisation might occur (Selinker 1972, 1992; Littlewood 2006) and that adult learners might rely on the declarative memory and lexicon-based strategies while acquiring the article use grammar (Ullman 2001, 2004). Finally, the Syntactic Misanalysis Account provided a crucial theoretical basis for this study (Trenkić 2007, 2008, 2009).

In order to be able to define the patterns in article use by Czech learners in FL Dutch, we investigated the concept of definiteness in general and its expressing in both Dutch and Czech in particular. While Dutch makes use of a system of articles, Czech does not use any overt carrier of grammatical definiteness. However, contrary to the *Syntactic Misanalysis Account* (Trenkić 2007, 2008, 2009), it was argued that the widely spread DP hypothesis could be applied on Czech following Veselovská (2001, 2014). Referring to that, the *Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis* was proposed stating that Czech learners of Dutch misanalyse the morphosyntactic function of articles by relying on the pragmatic features of the context since the form-meaning pattern of articles is not transparent for the FL learners. Therefore, it was assumed that Czech learners primarily omit and substitute articles in Dutch for pragmatic reasons.

After having described the theoretical background for this research, a cross-sectional empirical study was carried out examining article interlanguage production of Czech university students in FL Dutch based on three elicitation methods, namely a free text writing test, a translation test and a forced-choice elicitation test.

The results of this study confirmed that the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch improves as their language proficiency level increases. Furthermore, the predicted transfer from L1 observed in a large omission of articles in all contexts. Omission was even more likely to occur in adjectivally modified contexts and when articles preceded abstract nominals. Above that, the article use by Czech learners in FL Dutch was characterized by a high substitution rate based on definiteness, especially in [-definite] contexts. It was argued that indefinite articles might be substituted by definite articles mainly by focusing on explicitly stated knowledge from the context. Finally, it was predicted that Czech learners of FL Dutch



would overgeneralise the definite article *de* when *het* was required in [+neuter] condition. Our assumption was that this might be caused by the pragmatic consideration that the gender of the majority of all Dutch words is [-neuter]. However, this prediction proved to be correct only for the lowest language proficiency group of participants. The higher language proficiency groups presumably paid more attention to [+neuter] condition resulting in a more frequent substitution of *de* by *het*. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the differences within the two groups were not statistically significant as the data was scant to make any firm conclusions.

To sum up, the Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis was only partially confirmed. The results showed certain aspects of the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch which indicated that errors were made by relying on the pragmatic features of the context, whereas other data elicited in this research showed a less pragmatic side of the article use errors by Czech learners in FL Dutch. Based on that, we conclude that the article interlanguage production of adult Czech learners of FL Dutch is affected by L1 and therefore partly discourse-driven which leads to a misanalysis of the grammatical and semantic functions of articles and thus their omission and substitution in FL Dutch (cf. Pimingsdorfer 2010, Trenkić 2007, 2008, 2009).

Having more insight into the article interlanguage production by Czech learners of FL Dutch, we would suggest to draw the learner's attention more extensively to the functions of articles in Dutch when teaching articles. Furthermore, explicit instructions regarding semantic (in)definiteness might help acquiring correct article use in Dutch.

With reference to the introduction to this thesis, we hope this research was able to push the limits of the Czech learner's (inter)language a little further by having explored and defined some of the patterns of article interlanguage production of adult Czech learners in FL Dutch.

## Abstract in English

Title: With (an) eye to Czech article use in Dutch.  
Patterns of interlanguage production of articles by adult Czech learners  
in FL Dutch

Author: Mgr. Markéta Kluková

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Wilken Engelbrecht

Number of pages and characters: 163 pages, 219.775 characters

Number of appendices: 4

Abstract (min. 900 characters):

This dissertation examines patterns in interlanguage production of articles by adult Czech learners in FL Dutch. Firstly, recent research into L2/FL acquisition focusing on article use is presented. Furthermore, the category of definiteness in general and its expressing in both Dutch and Czech in particular are investigated.

After having described the theoretical background, research hypotheses were formulated resulting in the proposed Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis. In order to test these hypotheses, a cross-sectional empirical study was carried out examining article interlanguage production of Czech university students of FL Dutch.

The results of this study showed that the higher the language proficiency level they have reached, the more successful article use in FL Dutch. Furthermore, the predicted transfer from L1 was confirmed based on a large omission of articles in all contexts. Besides that, the article use by Czech learners in FL Dutch was characterized by a high substitution rate based on definiteness, especially in [-definite] contexts. The Pragmatic Misanalysis Hypothesis was only partially confirmed. There were certain aspects of the article interlanguage production of Czech learners in FL Dutch which indicated that errors were made by relying on the pragmatic features of the context, whereas other data elicited in this research showed a less pragmatic side of the article use errors by Czech learners in FL Dutch, such as substitution of the definite article *de* by *het* in [-neuter] contexts.

Keywords: article, L2/FL acquisition, definiteness, specificity, gender, Dutch, Czech, transfer, omission, substitution

## Abstrakt v češtině

Název práce: České užití členů v nizozemštině.  
Charakteristika interlingvální produkce členů českých studentů  
nizozemštiny jako cizího jazyka

Autor práce: Mgr. Markéta Kluková

Vedoucí práce: Prof. dr. Wilken Engelbrecht

Počet stran a znaků: 163 stran, 219.775 znaků

Počet příloh: 4

Abstrakt (minimálně 900 znaků):

Tato disertační práce zkoumá charakteristiku interlingvální produkce členů dospělých českých studentů nizozemštiny jako cizího jazyka. Nejprve je prezentován recentní výzkum osvojování druhého a cizího jazyka se zaměřením na užití členů. Dále je obecně pohlíženo na kategorii určitosti a její vyjádření jak v nizozemském, tak českém jazyce.

Na základě teoretické části tohoto výzkumu jsou formulovány výzkumné hypotézy, které vyústily v navržení Hypotézy pragmatické misanalýzy. Za účelem ověření daných hypotéz byla provedena průřezová empirická studie zkoumající interlingvální produkci členů českých vysokoškolských studentů nizozemštiny.

Výsledky této studie prokázaly, že čím vyšší je jazyková úroveň studentů, tím úspěšnější je užití členů v FL nizozemštině. Dále byl potvrzen také předpokládaný přenos z mateřského jazyka pozorovaný na základě extenzivní omise členů ve všech kontextech. Kromě toho se produkce členů českých studentů vyznačovala vysokou mírou substituce na základě určitosti, zejména v [-Def] kontextech. Hypotéza pragmatické misanalýzy pak byla potvrzena pouze částečně. Jisté aspekty interlingvální produkce členů českých studentů nizozemštiny jako cizího jazyka naznačovaly, že k chybám došlo spolehnáním se na pragmatické rysy kontextu, zatímco jiná data získaná v tomto výzkumu ukazovala na méně pragmatickou stránku chyb v užití členů, jako je například substituce určitého členu společného rodu *de* za člen středního rodu *het* v [-Neuter] kontextech.

Klíčová slova: člen, osvojování druhého a cizího jazyka, určitost, specifičnost, rod, nizozemština, čeština, omise, substituce

## Abstract in het Nederlands

Titel: Met (het) oog op Tsjechisch lidwoordgebruik in het Nederlands.  
Patronen in de tussentaalproductie van lidwoorden door volwassen  
Tsjechische leerders Nederlands als vreemde taal

Auteur: Mgr. Markéta Kluková

Begeleider: Prof. dr. Wilken Engelbrecht

Aantal pagina's en tekens: 163 pagina's, 219.775 tekens

Aantal bijlagen: 4

Abstract (min. 900 tekens):

Deze dissertatie onderzoekt patronen in de tussentaalproductie van lidwoorden door volwassen Tsjechische leerders Nederlands als vreemde taal. Ten eerste wordt recent onderzoek naar L2/FL-taalverwerving in kaart gebracht gericht op lidwoordgebruik. Verder wordt de categorie bepaaldheid onder de loep genomen en wordt de uitdrukking ervan in zowel het Nederlands als het Tsjechisch onderzocht.

Nadat de theoretische achtergrond voor dit onderzoek is beschreven, zijn de onderzoekshypothesen geformuleerd die resulteren in de voorgestelde Pragmatische Misanalyse Hypothese. Om deze hypothese te testen werd een cross-sectioneel empirisch onderzoek uitgevoerd naar de tussentaalproductie van lidwoorden door Tsjechische universiteitsstudenten Nederlands.

De resultaten van deze studie toonden aan dat hoe hoger het taalvaardigheidsniveau, hoe succesvoller het lidwoordgebruik in het FL Nederlands. Verder werd de voorspelde transfer uit L1 bevestigd op grond van een significante omissie van lidwoorden in alle contexten. Daarnaast werd het lidwoordgebruik door Tsjechische leerders Nederlands gekenmerkt door een hoog substitutiepercentage op basis van bepaaldheid, vooral in [-bepaald] contexten. De Pragmatische Misanalyse Hypothese werd slechts gedeeltelijk bevestigd. Er waren bepaalde aspecten van de tussentaalproductie van lidwoorden door Tsjechische leerders die erop wezen dat fouten werden gemaakt door te rekenen op de pragmatische kenmerken van de context, terwijl andere gegevens een minder pragmatische kant van de fouten in het lidwoordgebruik lieten zien zoals de substitutie van het zijdige lidwoord *de* door het onzijdige lidwoord *het* in [-neuter] contexten.

Sleutelwoorden: lidwoord, tweede- en vreemdetaalverwerving, bepaaldheid, specificiteit, geslacht, Nederlands, Tsjechisch, transfer, omissie, substitutie

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 Test for Czech learners

### Introduction



Univerzita Palackého  
v Olomouci

### PhD výzkum - Akvizice nizozemského jazyka



Milé nederlandistky, milí nederlandisté,

chtěla bych Vás tímto poprosit o účast na mém disertačním výzkumu na Univerzitě Palackého, který se zaměřuje na akvizici nizozemského jazyka studenty s českým mateřským jazykem.

Vaše účast na této studii je zcela dobrovolná. Vyplněním testu souhlasíte se zpracováním uvedených dat, přičemž jsou veškeré odpovědi důvěrné a anonymní. Test se skládá z následujících úloh:

1. psaní volného textu
2. překlad textu z českého do nizozemského jazyka
3. uzavřené otázky s jednou správnou odpovědí

Splnění všech testových úloh bude trvat přibližně 45 minut. Nepoužívejte, prosím, žádné slovníky či internetové vyhledávače.

Máte-li jakékoliv dotazy ohledně tohoto testu, použité metodologie či finálních závěrů mého výzkumu, kontaktujte mne, prosím, na e-mailové adrese: [marketa.klukova@gmail.com](mailto:marketa.klukova@gmail.com).

Moc děkuji za Váš čas a podporu!

S pozdravem  
Markéta Kluková

Test spustíte kliknutím na tlačítko **Next**.

Next

## Subject information

### Údaje respondenta

\* Věk

\* Rodný jazyk

\* Jeden z (pra)rodičů je/není rodilý mluvčí nizozemštiny

\* Počet roků výuky nizozemštiny (celkově)

Počet hodin výuky nizozemštiny za rok (jazyková cvičení a gramatika)

Materiál používaný při výuce nizozemštiny (jazyková cvičení a gramatika)

Případné poznámky (studium/práce v nizozemsky mluvící zemi, kontakt s nizozemštinou)

### Dosažený jazykový certifikát z nizozemského jazyka

- žádný certifikát
- Maatschappelijk Informeel (A2)
- Maatschappelijk Formeel (B1)
- Zakelijk Professioneel (B2)
- Educatief Startbekwaam (B2)
- Educatief Professioneel (C1)

## Znalost dalších cizích jazyků

|                   | žádná znalost         | začátečník            | středně pokročilý     | pokročilý             |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Anglický jazyk    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Německý jazyk     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Francouzský jazyk | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Španělský jazyk   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ruský jazyk       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Pokud ovládáte i jiné než výše uvedené jazyky, uveďte jaké a na jaké úrovni:

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## Free text writing test

### Psaní volného textu

Napište svému kamarádovi zprávu v nizozemském jazyce o tom, jakou zajímavou knihu jste četli a o čem pojednává. Zpráva by měla být 8-10 vět dlouhá.

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## Translation test

### Překlad

Přeložte z českého do nizozemského jazyka:

Když turisté myslí na Nizozemsko, tak často myslí na tulipány a mlýny. Co však znamená Nizozemsko pro Nizozemce? Existuje vůbec nějaká nizozemská identita? Velká část obyvatel tvrdí, že nizozemská identita opravdu existuje. Je to především nizozemský jazyk, ale také národní svátky, tradice a zvyky. I svoboda je důležitým znakem nizozemské identity. Nizozemsko je království. Královská rodina je proto také úzce spojena s touto zemí. Na Den krále slaví Nizozemsko narozeniny krále Viléma Alexandra. Celá země se zbarví do oranžova.

tulipán – tulp

mlýn – molen

echter – však

část – deel

tvrdit – beweren

existovat – bestaan

obyvatel – inwoner

zvyk – gewoonte

svoboda – vrijheid

znak – kenmerk

království – koninkrijk

úzce spojený s – nauw verbonden met

Den krále – Koningsdag

zbarvit se – kleuren

## Forced-choice elicitation test

### Forced-choice elicitation test

Vyberte jednu z možností.

*In de supermarkt*

Bediende: Kan ik u helpen?

Klant: Ja, graag. Ik ben op zoek naar (1) \_\_\_ appels.

- |     | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

Marjan: Wat heb je gistermiddag gedaan?

Esther: Ik ben in een kledingwinkel geweest en heb (2) \_\_\_ jas gekocht.

Ik hoop dat jij (3) \_\_\_ jas ook leuk vindt.

- |     | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

Marjon: We hebben (4) \_\_\_ huis gekocht.

Annemarie: Wat leuk! Gefeliciteerd.

Marjon: We zijn van plan om (5) \_\_\_ huis gedeeltelijk te verbouwen.

Annemarie: Veel succes met de verbouwing.

- |     | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
-

*Na afloop van een hardloopwedstrijd*

Anette: Kunnen we al naar huis gaan?

Petra: Nee, nog niet. Ik wil nog met (6) \_\_\_ winnaar van deze wedstrijd praten.  
Zij is een goede vriend van mij en ik wil haar feliciteren!

- |     | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

*Op bezoek*

Joyce: Kan ik je (7) \_\_\_ kopje koffie aanbieden?

Jos: Nee, dank je wel. Ik lust (8) \_\_\_ koffie.

- |     | de                    | het                   | een                   | geen                  | -                     |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (8) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

*In de biologielees*

Leraar: (9) \_\_\_ dolfijn is een zoogdier.

Scholier: Betekent dat dat (10) \_\_\_ dolfijnen geen vissen zijn?

Leraar: Precies.

- |      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (9)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (10) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Jollette: In een artikel stond geschreven dat (11) \_\_\_ Fransman dagelijks kaas eet en wijn drinkt.

Maarten: Wat (12) \_\_\_ stereotype!

Jollette: Dat vind ik ook.

- |      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (11) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (12) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

### *In de winkel*

Bediende: Hoe kan ik u helpen?

Klant: Ik wil graag met (13) \_\_\_ eigenaar van deze zaak spreken.

Het maakt me niet uit wie het is. Ik wil een klacht indienen.

- |      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (13) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

Monique: We hebben (14) \_\_\_ nieuwe collega. Hij heet Arthur en is heel behulpzaam.

Christina: Fijn om te horen. Ik hoop hem snel te ontmoeten.

- |      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (14) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
- 

### *Op het werk*

Priscilla: Blijf je morgen thuiswerken?

Sacha: Nee, morgen ga ik naar (15) \_\_\_ kantoor.

- |      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (15) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

*Op het politiebureau*

Politieagent René: Ik heb je al lang niet gezien.

Politieagent Ruud: Sorry, ik heb het druk.

We zoeken (16) \_\_\_ gevluchte moordenaar van mevrouw De Wit.

Zijn naam is Piet Deugniet en hij is (17) \_\_\_ bekende crimineel.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (16) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (17) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

*In de galerie*

Marianne: Zie je dat mooie landschapschilderij?

Yvonne: Ja, het is echt prachtig.

Marianne: Jammer dat (18) \_\_\_ auteur van (19) \_\_\_ schilderij onbekend is.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (18) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (19) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

*Op het vliegveld*

Elaine: Sorry, mag ik u iets vragen?

Beveiligingsagent: Jazeker, hoe kan ik u helpen?

Elaine: Ik probeer (20) \_\_\_ kleine blonde vrouw te vinden.

Zij is met vlucht 158 aangekomen. Heeft u haar misschien gezien?

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (20) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



*Na de eerste schooldag*

Moeder: Hoe was het op school vandaag?

Zoon: Leuk. Ik heb met verschillende klasgenoten gespeeld.  
Ik hoop snel (21) \_\_\_ nieuwe vrienden te kunnen maken.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (21) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

*Aan de universiteit*

Student: Ik ben op zoek naar professor De Jonge.

Assistent: Volgens mij heeft hij nu een afspraak met (22) \_\_\_ studente.  
Ik weet helaas niet wie zij is en wanneer professor De Jonge terugkomt.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (22) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

Layla: Ik hoop dat je (23) \_\_\_ fijn weekend hebt gehad.

Clara: Ja hoor, we hebben (24) \_\_\_ hoofdstad van Denemarken bezocht.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (23) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (24) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

Leonie: Mijn zus speelt (25) \_\_\_ viool.

Nadia: Leuk! Laat mij maar weten als zij (26) \_\_\_ concert speelt.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (25) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (26) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Francis: Ik heb gisteren (27) \_\_\_ spannende film gezien.

Aletta: Waar ging (28) \_\_\_ film over?

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (27) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (28) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

Angela: Weet jij hoe oud Margriet is?

Henriette: Nee, maar zij zal rond (29)\_\_\_ dertig zijn.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (29) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

---

*In de kantine*

Chris: Ik heb (30) \_\_\_ soep en (31) \_\_\_ broodje voor je besteld.

Roderick: Dank je wel. (32) \_\_\_ broodje ziet er echt lekker uit.

|      | de                    | het                   | een                   | -                     |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (30) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (31) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (32) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## **Translation of the test for Czech learners**

Introduction

*Dear students of Dutch,*

*I would like to ask you to participate in my dissertation research at the Palacký University which focuses on acquisition of Dutch by students with a Czech mother tongue.*

*Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. By completing the test, you agree to the*

*processing of the data provided, while all answers are confidential and anonymous. The test consists of the following tasks:*

- 1. free text writing*
- 2. translation from Czech to Dutch*
- 3. closed questions with one correct answer*

*It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete all test tasks. Please do not use any dictionaries or internet search engines.*

*If you have any questions about this test, the methodology used or the final conclusions of my research, please contact me at the e-mail address: [marketa.klukova@gmail.com](mailto:marketa.klukova@gmail.com).*

*Thank you very much for your time and support!*

*Best regards,*

*Markéta Kluková*

*Click **Next** to start the test.*

#### Subject information

- Age
- Native language
- One of my (grand)parents is a Dutch native speaker (yes/no)
- Number of years of Dutch language acquisition (total)
- Number of hours of Dutch language acquisition per year (language lessons and grammar)
- Material used during Dutch lessons
- Other relevant information (studies/work in Dutch speaking countries, contact with Dutch)
- Dutch language certificate achieved:
  - no certificate
  - Maatschappelijk Informeel (A2)
  - Maatschappelijk Formeel (B1)
  - Zakelijk Professioneel (B2)
  - Educatief Startbekwaam (B2)
  - Educatief Professioneel (C1)
- Knowledge of other foreign languages:
- English                      no knowledge                      beginner                      intermediate                      advanced

- German                      no knowledge              beginner              intermediate      advanced
- French                      no knowledge              beginner              intermediate      advanced
- Russian                      no knowledge              beginner              intermediate      advanced
- If you speak any other languages than the ones listed above, please state what languages and at which level

Free text writing test

*Write a message in Dutch to your friend saying what book you have read and what it is about. The message should be 8-10 sentences long.*

Translation test

*Translate the following text from Czech to Dutch:*

When tourists think of the Netherlands, they often think of tulips and mills. But what does the Netherlands mean for the Dutch? Is there any Dutch identity at all? A large part of the population claims that the Dutch identity really exists. There is mainly the Dutch language, but also national holidays, traditions and customs. Freedom is also an important feature of the Dutch identity. The Netherlands is a kingdom. The royal family is therefore also closely associated with this country. On King's Day, the Netherlands celebrates the birthday of King William Alexander. The whole country turns orange.

|                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| tulip                  | custom                  |
| mill                   | freedom                 |
| but, however           | feature                 |
| part                   | kingdom                 |
| claim                  | closely associated with |
| exist                  | King's Day              |
| inhabitant, population | turn, colour            |

Forced-choice elicitation test

*In the supermarket*

Clerk: Can I help you?

Customer: Yes, please. I'm looking for (1) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) apples.

Marjan: What did you do yesterday afternoon?

Esther: I went to a clothing store and bought (2) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) jacket. I hope you like (3) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) jacket too.

Marjon: We bought (4) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) house.

Annemarie: Great! Congratulations.

Marjon: We are planning to partially renovate (5) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) house.

Annemarie: Good luck with the renovation.

*After a running race*

Anette: Can we go home now?

Petra: No, not yet. I want to talk to (6) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) winner of this contest. She is a good friend of mine and I want to congratulate her!

*Visiting*

Joyce: Can I offer you (7) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) cup of coffee?

Jos: No, thank you. I like (8) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / - / no) coffee.

*In biology class*

Teacher: (9) \_\_\_\_ (The / A / -) dolphin is a mammal.

Student: Does that mean that (10) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) dolphins are not fish?

Teacher: Exactly.

Jolette: In an article, it was written that (11) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) Frenchman eats cheese and drinks wine every day.

Maarten: What (12) \_\_\_\_ (the / a / -) stereotype!

Jolette: I think so too.

*In the shop*

Clerk: How can I help you?

Customer: I would like to speak to (13) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) owner of this business.  
I don't care who it is. I want to file a complaint.

Monique: We have (14) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) new colleague. His name is Arthur and he is very helpful.

Christina: Good to hear. I hope to meet him soon.

*At work*

Priscilla: Will you continue working from home tomorrow?

Sacha: No, tomorrow I'm going to (15) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) office.

*At the police station*

Police officer René: I haven't seen you in a long time.

Police officer Ruud: Sorry, I'm busy. We are looking for (16) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) runaway murderer of Mrs. De Wit. His name is Piet Deugniet and he is (17) \_\_\_ known criminal.

*In the gallery*

Marianne: Can you see that beautiful landscape painting?

Yvonne: Yes, it's really beautiful.

Marianne: Too bad (18) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) author of (19) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) painting is unknown.

*At the airport*

Elaine: Sorry, can I ask you something?

Security agent: Sure, how can I help you?

Elaine: I'm trying to find (20) \_\_\_ little blond (the / a / -) woman.  
She arrived on flight 158. Have you seen her?

*After the first day of school*

Mother: How was the school today?

Son: Nice. I played with several classmates. I hope to make (21) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) new friends soon.

*At the university*

Student: I am looking for Professor De Jonge.

Assistant: I think he has an appointment with (22) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) student now.  
Unfortunately, I do not know who she is and when Professor De Jonge will return.

Layla: I hope you (23) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) had a nice weekend.

Clara: Sure, we visited (24) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) capital of Denmark.

Leonie: My sister plays (25) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) violin.

Nadia: Nice! Let me know when she plays (26) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) concert.

Francis: I saw (27) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) exciting movie yesterday.

Aletta: What was (28) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) movie about?

Angela: Do you know how old Margriet is?

Henriette: No, but she will be around (29) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) thirty.

*In the cafeteria*

Chris: I ordered (30) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) soup and (31) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) sandwich for you.

Roderick: Thank you. (32) \_\_\_ (the / a / -) sandwich looks really nice.

## Appendix 2 Test for Dutch control group

### Introduction



Palacký University  
Olomouc

### PhD onderzoek - Lidwoordgebruik in het Nederlands



Beste collega,

Je bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan mijn PhD onderzoek aan de Palacký Universiteit te Olomouc met betrekking tot het lidwoordgebruik in het Nederlands door Tsjechische volwassen leerders.

Je deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. Alle antwoorden zijn strikt vertrouwelijk en anoniem. De gegevens worden alleen in geaggregeerde vorm verwerkt. Het invullen van de test duurt ongeveer 5-10 minuten.

Mocht je vragen hebben over de test, de gebruikte methodologie of de finale conclusies van mijn onderzoek, neem gerust contact met mij op via [marketa.klukova@gmail.com](mailto:marketa.klukova@gmail.com).

Alvast bedankt voor je tijd en steun!

Hartelijke groet,  
Markéta Kluková

Start de test door te klikken op de knop **Next**.

Next

### Subject information

#### Informatie over de respondent

\* Leeftijd

\* Moedertaal



## Cloze test

### Cloze test

Vul het juiste woord in. Je kunt de velden ook leeg laten, indien je denkt dat er niets hoeft te worden ingevuld.

Als (1) \_\_\_ toeristen aan (2) \_\_\_ Nederland denken, dan denken ze vaak aan (3) \_\_\_ tulpen en (4) \_\_\_ molens. Wat betekent (5) \_\_\_ Nederland echter voor (6) \_\_\_ Nederlanders? Bestaat er überhaupt (7) \_\_\_ Nederlandse identiteit? (8) \_\_\_ groot deel van (9) \_\_\_ inwoners beweert dat (10) \_\_\_ Nederlandse identiteit wel bestaat.

Het is vooral (11) \_\_\_ Nederlandse taal, maar ook (12) \_\_\_ nationale feestdagen, (13) \_\_\_ tradities en (14) \_\_\_ gewoonten. Ook (15) \_\_\_ vrijheid is (16) \_\_\_ belangrijk kenmerk van (17) \_\_\_ Nederlandse identiteit. (18) \_\_\_ Nederland is (19) \_\_\_ koninkrijk. (20) \_\_\_ koninklijke familie is daarom ook nauw verbonden met dit land.

Op (21) \_\_\_ Koningsdag viert (22) \_\_\_ Nederland (23) \_\_\_ verjaardag van (24) \_\_\_ koning (25) \_\_\_ Willem-Alexander. (26) \_\_\_ hele land kleurt oranje.

Forced-choice elicitation test (see Appendix 1)

### **Translation of the test for Dutch control group**

Introduction

*Dear colleague,*

*You are invited to participate in my PhD research at Palacký University in Olomouc into the use of articles in Dutch by Czech adult learners.*

*Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. All answers are strictly confidential and anonymous. The data is processed in aggregated form only. Completing the test takes about 5-10 minutes.*

*If you have any questions about this test, the methodology used or the final conclusions of my research, please contact me at the e-mail address: marketa.klukova@gmail.com.*

*Thank you very much for your time and support!*

*Best regards,  
Markéta Kluková*

*Click **Next** to start the test.*

#### Subject information

- Age
- Native language

#### Cloze test

*Fill in the right word. You can also leave the fields blank if you think nothing needs to be entered.*

When (1) \_\_\_ tourists think of (2) \_\_\_ Netherlands, they often think of (3) \_\_\_ tulips and (4) \_\_\_ mills. But what does (5) \_\_\_ Netherlands mean for (6) \_\_\_ Dutch? Is there (7) \_\_\_ Dutch identity at all? (8) \_\_\_ large part of (9) \_\_\_ population claims that (10) \_\_\_ Dutch identity really exists. There is mainly (11) \_\_\_ Dutch language, but also (12) \_\_\_ national holidays, (13) \_\_\_ traditions and (14) \_\_\_ customs. (15) \_\_\_ freedom is also (16) \_\_\_ important feature of (17) \_\_\_ Dutch identity. (18) \_\_\_ Netherlands is (19) \_\_\_ kingdom. (20) \_\_\_ royal family is therefore also closely associated with this country. On (21) \_\_\_ King's Day, (22) \_\_\_ Netherlands celebrates (23) \_\_\_ birthday of (24) \_\_\_ King (25) \_\_\_ William Alexander. (26) \_\_\_ whole country turns orange.

**Appendix 3 Responses of Czech learners (available on CD)**

**Appendix 4 Responses of Dutch control group (available on CD)**